Hook, Line, and Sinker

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Hook, Line, and Sinker

by TrappedInAPentagram

Summary

Will doesn't believe in demons. But whoever is behind this newest string of murders certainly does. Even if they did exist, why anyone would try to appeal to one was beyond Will, anyway. The only thing waiting for those who bargained with demons was death.

Offerings

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Will Graham.”

A fall breeze ruffled the drapes hanging in front of the open window. They blocked most of the sunlight, leaving a strip of brightness cutting through the air, highlighting the minimal flecks of dust floating through the space between Hannibal and Bedelia. They were seated across from one another, both in a cushioned armchair and each holding a glass of wine.

Hannibal swirled his glass beneath his nose as he pondered the name she’d given to him. It meant nothing to him, not yet anyway. His eyes were resting on the sliver of trees he could make out through the window. The wind tousled the fallen leaves that littered the ground. He was leaned back, one knee resting over the other. “Who is he?” he asked at last.

“An unofficial FBI agent.”

“Unofficial?” Hannibal raised a brow.

“Yes,” she said, knowing now that she’d caught his attention. “He’s a special agent.”

The term made the corner of Hannibal's lip twitch into a grin. “What makes him special?”

“He’s an empath,” Bedelia responded, studying the wine in her glass. “To my understanding, he’s sent in to the scenes of particularly grotesque murders and is able to piece together why the murderer committed the crime.”

“Why does this intrigue you?”

“It doesn’t. But it should intrigue you. If he’s as empathetic as I’m led to believe, that makes him particularly…malleable," she looked to him, her gaze carrying a weight behind her words.

“Corruptible, more like,” Hannibal replied, his eyes flicking to meet hers, “but I would not be so sure. Just because he can easily relate to the reasoning of others does not make him impressionable.”

“It does make him more likely to be enthralled by you.”

“Yet it is not a guarantee, Bedelia.”

“No, I suppose not," she tilted her head. "But you, of all people, could twist him down a new path.”

“You, of all people, ought to know never to doubt my ability to do so,” Hannibal replied evenly.

“I never said I doubted you. But you do seem uncharacteristically uncertain about this assignment.”

Hannibal shook his head, “Not uncertain. Just curious.”

“Would you like me to give you more details?”

“No,” Hannibal looked back out the window, a small smile playing at his lips. “I think I want to hear more from him.”

“Very well. Just remember what you’re there for.”

“Don’t worry. His soul will be yours,” Hannibal replied before lifting the glass to his lips to take a drink.

Bedelia smiled at his response, saying, "I'll drink to that," and rose her own glass to her mouth.

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Will scrambled to grab his phone. It was the only thing he could think of on hand with a built-in flashlight. He had fuck-all knowledge of where he was. What he did know is that it was pitch black, the type of blackness that could eat you alive, leaving you unable to see your own hand inches from your face. It was also frigid, and he didn’t even have a jacket on. He was wearing what he’d fallen asleep in: gray tank top, loose fitting flannel pants and boxers under that. Nada else. The air was bitter and sharp, piercing directly through the fabric of his pajamas.

Will finally managed to grab the phone in his pocket and turned on the screen. He figured he might as well check, but unsurprisingly, he had no bars. He pressed the button to turn on the phone's flashlight with a shaky finger, taking a moment to let his eyes adjust. He looked around to get a feel for his environment, right before wishing he hadn’t turned on the light at all. Highlighted by the circle of brightness was a distorted figure laying in front of him. Will jumped back a step; he hadn’t been able to hear what he assumed to be a mangled woman until he could see her. And damn, what a sight. Will was fairly certain she had more muscle showing than skin with the sheer number of cuts and scrapes covering her body. She was half propped against a stone wall—the entire room was carved out of rock, which would contribute to the cold, Will mentally noted. She was drawing in haggard breaths, sitting in a pool of her own blood.

“Hey,” Will finally found the voice to speak, making himself move to kneel down by the broken girl. “Hey, can you hear me?”

After a labored breath, she replied, “I’m not dead, now am I?”

Will was surprised that even through the immense pain she undoubtedly was feeling, she had the will to be sarcastic. He brushed it off and asked, “Do you know where we are?”
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The girl unexpectedly began to laugh, right before sputtering up blood that ran down her chin. “Do you not?”

“That’s…kind of why I’m asking, actually.”

“You…aren’t from around here, then,” the woman replied, voice wheezy from what Will only assumed was lack of use.

“If I was, I’d know where I was,” Will retorted, hoping to win the girl’s favor by playing to her sense of dry humor.

“Can’t argue…with that,” she chortled before falling prey to another coughing fit.

Will waited for her to be done before asking, “Okay, if you won’t tell me where we are, then who did this to you?”

“What’s it matter to you?”

“Well, if I find him, I can stop him from doing it to other people. It’s in my job description.”

At that, she laughed harder than ever. When she had regained her composure, she said, “I expect...you don’t need to find him. He’ll find you, soon enough.”

“What do you mean?” Will frowned, suddenly wishing he had his gun, if not for self-protection then to put this woman out of her misery.

“He’s always sent…to those…who think they need him. But at…a terrible cost.”

“What cost?”

“It depends...on the buyer.”

Will shook his head, growing tired of her cryptic answers. “Look, I want to get out of here sooner than later, so just tell me where I can find him.”

The girl chuckled, “If you think…you stand a chance against him, you’re more naïve...than I thought.”

“I just want to talk to him.”

“No,” she replied, looking up at Will. He didn't know how he hadn't noticed, but her eyes were pitch black, “he wants to talk to you.”

Before Will could bother with a retort, he heard the distinct clack of hooves on stone approaching from behind him. He found himself petrified, unable to turn around, though he desperately desired to know what was coming. It was around then that Will realized something that was amiss—he could see his shadow in front of him, even though his phone light was facing away from him. As the hoof-steps grew closer, the shadow of a pair of antlers grew where the silhouette of Will’s head was.

A voice belonging to the unknown being behind him, deep and strong yet smooth as silk, said, “Your time will come,” before a hand grabbed his shoulder.

Will gasped as his eyes snapped open. He panted for air, taking a moment to realize he was in his bedroom and that whatever he’d just seen had been a dream. He wiped a hand over his face and made a disgusted grunt in the back of his throat—his face was covered in sweat. “Gross,” he mumbled to himself, wiping an arm across his forehead. Compared to the dream, his room was almost unbearably hot. Winston, the newest member of his family, whined and perked his head up upon hearing Will awaken. “It’s alright, boy,” Will said, yawning and rubbing the dog’s head before stretching his arms up. He glanced out his window, noting it was still dark and that he most definitely should try to get more sleep. However, the voice that had spoken to him was still echoing strong in his mind. There was another part to the dream, Will knew there had been. Maybe another person had been there? He couldn't recall. What did it mean? Will wasn’t religious, by any means, so he hardly saw it as a sign. Hard to have faith in a god that could let the things he’d seen happen.

He scratched his head and stood up, walking himself to the kitchen for a glass of water. He decided that he’d at least slake his thirst before trying to get some more sleep for the following day at the bureau. He rifled for a cup and walked to the sink. It wasn’t until he started filling it that he glanced up and froze. Standing in his yard was an enormous stag. It was no buck, and moose didn’t live in Virginia. But then, neither did stags, last he checked.

Should he call someone about this? Who would he even call, animal control? Maybe it escaped from the zoo. He almost slapped himself for that thought—what zoo? Will rubbed his eyes and looked back out the window, but the stag remained standing there. And unless Will was very much mistaken, it was watching him.

“What the hell?” he mumbled. He thought it best to try to chase it off; it wasn’t like he could adopt it, anyway. He slipped on his robe and motioned for his dogs to stay as he opened the front door, making his way to the side of the house the kitchen window faced out of. As he started considering the possibility that it might be aggressive and that he’d rather not be gored by a deer, he realized that the stag was gone. He blinked, looking around. It wasn’t across the street. He did a lap around his house, still seeing no signs of it. He paused in the place he was positive he’d seen it and stooped down, but he couldn’t even make out any tracks.

“Well, this is it. I’m finally losing it,” Will mumbled as he straightened up. He shook his head and went back inside, drinking his water before laying back down in bed. He spent a few minutes staring at the ceiling, wondering if hallucinations were normal for guys his age. He dismissed it as being a mix of exhaustion and stress from work, rolling over and falling back into an uneasy sleep.

Come morning, the sight of the stag still weighed on Will's mind. He wasn't sure why it stuck around with him, but it unnerved him enough to prompt him to double check the location he'd seen it with daylight out. As he'd anticipated, there were still no signs of it. He rubbed a hand through his hair and went back inside to ready himself for work. When he arrived at the bureau, he was almost immediately told to head to Jack Crawford's office. He entered the

room to Jack looking like a child at Christmas. “We have a new lead,” Jack said in response to Will’s questioning look.

“It’d be nice to know what kind of lead you’re talking about,” Will said, but instead of a response, he was handed a photo. He took his glasses out of his pocket and slid them onto his nose to study it. He frowned, the image depicting a mangled corpse inside a pentagram drawn in what he could only assume was blood. There were the average other items typically found at a summoning circle—candles, incense, pieces of bone and other various entrails. What piqued Will’s interest was the heart placed in the mouth of the corpse.

“A lead that could bring us closer to the Necromancer,” Jack stated, even though now it was obvious to Will what he’d meant. “All the other victims didn’t have—“

“Hearts,” Will finished his sentence, mostly to make him shut up. He hated when Jack said things he already knew. “Little something special for a special little demon?” he asked cheekily; he'd made his position on the case clear, and even though it was agreed their killer wasn't trying to raise the dead, the name had stuck.

“Maybe,” Jack replied. They’d been working on the Necromancer case for years. Some psychopath had been trying to summon a demon, or earn one’s favor, as Will had suggested. He'd been nicknamed the Necromancer because his victims were always left in pentagrams posed in ways that suggested they were simply asleep. The corpses were also always devoid of certain organs. This killer was one of the most elusive they’d ever dealt with. The only thing tying the victims together were their age and gender, and they always disappeared on a Sunday. The fact that the Necromancer was apparently killing at random meant he was all the more dangerous; they didn’t know who would be the next target, so they didn’t know who to protect. Will was inclined to believe the summoning, if indeed that's what their guy was doing, hadn’t worked for obvious reasons.

“Who was the victim, here?” Will asked.

“I’ll show you,” Jack said, motioning for him to follow. He led Will to the morgue, where Price, Zeller, and Beverly were all working on a severely desecrated corpse. The other bodies they'd found hadn't been nearly as mangled. “Her name is Elise Nichols. Sixth of the string of girls who have been killed. She went missing not even three days before turning up dead.”

Will did a double-take to the body. He couldn’t place why, but the sight of her corpse was ringing as strongly familiar to him. “Where was she found?” he asked, slightly distracted as he kept staring at her remains. He felt like his veins were pumping ice; where had he seen her before?

“Just like the others. She was in an abandoned cottage outside Salem, Virginia.”

“Ironic,” Will couldn’t help saying under his breath.

Beverly said, “Well, she wasn’t a witch.”

“Not that we know of,” Price retorted. “We did get a report that she had some sage and black tourmaline stones in her room. Commonly used as repellents for malevolent spirits and the

like.”

Will tuned them out as Zeller chimed in, “I thought burning sage was only good for when you were moving in to a new home?”

“Some believe you can burn it to keep out evil spirits at any time,” Price replied. “If she really wanted to be careful, she’d have lined her windowsill with cumin and salt.”

Jack said, “Enough. I don’t care how much she believed in ghosts. I want to know if she believed in God.”

“Probably not very much in her last moments,” Will said without thinking, now looking at the picture. The others in the room weren’t surprised to hear his indifferent comment. He glanced up to them when he realized it had grown silent and noticed them watching him. “Just saying. This wasn’t a pleasant death.”

“Well, you can say that again,” Zeller said, going back to studying the body. “As far as her belief in a higher power, her mother reported that she never left the house without her cross necklace. At the scene of the crime, there was no such jewelry found."

"Religious, just like the other girls," Jack said under his breath.

Price asked, "But why the heart on this one? What made her special enough to keep her heart with her?”

Jack said, “Maybe our guy was just trying something new. If the other summonings couldn’t work without leaving the heart, maybe he thought he’d try dressing this one up in a new way.”

“No, he knew what he was doing,” Will said, trying not to sound tired with the way his boss jumped to conclusions. “There was either something special about this victim, or he needed something…more than usual.”

“What does that mean?”

“I don’t know," Will said, masking his annoyance with Jack's condescending tone, "I’d have to see the room.”

“We can arrange that,” Jack nodded, taking out his phone.

While he walked off to make a phone call, Beverly asked, “How can you be so sure this one’s the special one? Isn’t it possible he’ll kill again in some other new way?”

“Oh, it’s entirely possible, it’s just not very likely,” Will replied.

“Why’s that?”

Instead of a direct response, Will asked, “What do you do when you’ve finished a work of art?”

“You…sign it?” Beverly answered, clearly not quite getting it. His coworkers rarely did.

Will handed her the picture and tapped the heart. “Five bodies for five points of a star, and one to create the centerpiece. He’s just signed an art piece.”

“Art piece? Meant for who?”

“Whoever he’s trying to please, I guess,” Will said, looking back down at Elise’s body, “and apparently, they have a very specific taste in offerings.”

Chapter End Notes

Man oh man. I'm so exited to delve into this new work on the anniversary of the last Demon-AU I wrote! I'd love to say I'd estimate this fic to last for about 25 chapters or so, but I can almost guarantee it'll be longer. So buckle up, kids, it's gonna be a bumpy, heart-wrenching, Will-breaking ride! If you have any comments or constructive criticisms, do not hesitate to leave them! I love seeing what readers have to say :D

First Taste

Chapter Notes

> Just yesterday I watched Mizomono, and earlier today I started my re-watch of season three. What better time to sit down with a bottle of fake wine (sparkling grape juice) and write a new chapter?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The ride to the crime scene was an arduous one. Not in the sense that there was traffic or bad weather, but Will had to endure sitting in a car with Jack with the expectation to make conversation. Will hated long car trips for this reason; he'd much prefer to be allowed to watch out the window in silence. But he had certain obligations to at least humor Jack with responses to his asinine questions.

"You think it's our guy?"

"You brought the body in, you tell me."

"What if the summoning worked this time?"

"It won't have."

"But if it did?"

"You'll need to hire a new kind of specialist, Jack. I don't deal in the supernatural."

Will couldn't have been more thankful when Jack pulled up to the cottage, noting that there was already another police car parked in front. It was about as quaint as Will had anticipated it'd be; moss and ivy were overtaking the outer walls, the windows were all either broken or cracked, and part of the roof had caved in. "Charming," Will said as they approached.

Jack looked amused but didn't laugh, as he had a tendency to do. Will couldn't actually recall ever hearing the head of the Behavioral Science Unit laugh. Jack responded, "Sure, if you don't mind the extra air circulation." He nodded to the two policemen stationed outside the cabin to make sure the scene wouldn't be disturbed and held the caution tape up for Will, who ducked under it and headed through the door. It creaked as it swung ajar, as did the floorboards as Will stepped on them.

The interior of the cabin made Will's skin crawl. It was a one-room setup, making it cramped but still cozy. Or it used to be. It smelled musty and damp; there was a broken table and a chair that had long since fallen over and was partially rotting away. There was what Will assumed used to be a bed in the far corner, and an old-style cast iron stove opposite that would have been used as a heat source in colder weather. The hole in the roof allowed in a

beam of light, which coincidentally highlighted an ancient mounted deer head on the wall. It looked like it had been partially moth-eaten, but even Will had to stop and marvel at the number of points it had on its antlers--at least twenty four, as a rough estimate. Then there was the matter of the giant red pentagram painted across the entire floor.

At each point of the star was a bowl with various ingredients; kneeling down by one, Will noticed some sort of flower petals resting atop what he was fairly certain was a liver. There were also five iron candlesticks on the corners of the inner pentagon. Without turning, Will asked, "You haven't moved anything?"

"The only thing removed from the scene was the body," Jack confirmed.

"Then I suppose it's fortunate our killer didn't try to revisit his piece," Will said, moving to study one of the candles. Upon closer inspection, the wick had been lit at some point, but while the fire was out, the wax built up in the pool of the wick's base was still liquefied. This made Will frown. He held a hand over it--no heat.

"Jack?" he asked.

"Hm?"

"Were the two stationed outside the only two assigned to watch the cabin?"

"They would have traded shifts with other agents. Why?"

Will turned, "This candle was lit recently."

Jack's brow furrowed. He barked, "Jones!"

"Yes, sir?" one of the policemen poked his head in from outside.

"Have you or Miller been inside this cabin since you started your watch?"

"No, sir. It wasn't to be disturbed, under your orders."

"Then why was it disturbed?"

Jones looked taken aback by that, asking, "Sir?"

"Did you see or hear anyone in here before we arrived?"

"No, it's been quiet as a graveyard."

Jack waved a hand of dismissal. Jones retreated back outside as Jack came to see the candle for himself. Will had already made a round to check the others, finding the same state of melted wax on each one. Will said, "This couldn't have been more than a few hours old. Go see if there was any point where nobody would have been here, or if they went to check on anything else nearby recently."

Jack nodded and left to interrogate the two men outside, leaving Will to work his magic. Will waited for the creaking door to close before looking back to the pentagram. He took a deep breath and let his eyelids flutter closed, tuning out the sound of voices from beyond the wall, allowing himself to become swallowed by the must and the faint scent of viscera.

I performed meticulous research before even daring to find my targets. This, this final presentation must be perfect. The lines of this pentagram had to be special--special for you. I blend the blood of my previous victims to become my pigment. The pieces I took from them to give to you lie at the points of the star--two kidneys, two lungs, a liver, and finally a heart to adorn the center. You will make better use of these offerings.

After lighting the candles, I speak aloud the incantation to summon you forth. I wish to bask in your presence. But you did not come. How have I disappointed you? There must have been a mistake--but now someone has stumbled across my offering, my gift for you, and they've taken it. Perhaps there is time to right this wrong. I must make an apology. This is my design.

Will's eyelids opened. He blinked several times to ground himself, bringing him back to the present moment. He would kill again. Will quickly left the cabin, setting a hand on Jack's shoulder, "He needs a new body."

Jack raised a brow, "Excuse me?"

"You took his offering," Will quickly tried to explain. "He-he needed it, and now that you went and took it, he's going to need a new one to apologize."

"Shit," Jack muttered, taking long strides to the car with Will in tow.

When they were both seated, Will asked, "Did they know anything?"

Jack revved up the engine and said, "About three hours ago, they both heard a gunshot in the woods and went to investigate. They didn't find anything."

"That'd have been him; he needed to draw them away so he could check whether his offering was still there."

"So why would he have lit the candles?"

"I don't know, maybe he thought it'd keep the pentagram fresh."

"Fresh?"

"I don't know, Jack," Will snapped. "He might have thought he was preserving the spiritual energy of the last body or something."

"So how are we supposed to track this guy down before he strikes again?"

Will shook his head, "He has to be close. If he risked coming back to this pentagram, he must be under some sort of time limit. He's going to be desperate."

"And desperation makes people sloppy."

"That it does. He won't have time to track down a new target, so he'll need someone close at hand. Maybe a relative or close friend," Will rubbed a hand over the stubble on his jaw, propping his elbow against the car door to rest his head in his hand.

"You think he'd kill a family member for the sake of a demon?"

"Depends on what he needs the demon for," Will watched the trees fly past the window as Jack sped towards the nearest town. "Bargaining with demons comes at a terrible cost," he continued under his breath. He narrowed his eyes as he considered what he'd just said; hadn't he heard that somewhere before?

"What cost?" Jack asked.

Will had been silently hoping he hadn't heard his last remark. "I don't...know," Will said, picking his head up as he saw a stag standing off in the trees. He leaned to try to keep an eye on it, noticing that its head remained fixed on him as the car passed it by. He rubbed his hand through his hair, repeating, "I don't know."

When they peeled into the parking lot of the local police station, Will's mind was still spinning over seeing the stag again. He couldn't be sure, but he was fairly certain it was the same one he'd seen at his house almost two hours away. It could be a coincidence; maybe they were in the middle of some sort of stag migration season Will knew nothing about. He pushed it to the back of his mind as Jack parked the car, and they headed into the building.

Jack and Will were presented to the local detective, Walker, who had already been filled in on their case. Jack used his phone to request that Beverly forward them pictures of the murdered girls who had all been the Necromancer's victims. As Walker paged through them, Will said, "We're looking for anyone who even remotely fits the characteristics of these girls. Roughly nineteen or twenty years old, dark hair, fair skin..."

Walker said, "Well, funny you should mention. There's a father-daughter duo who pop into town once in awhile on hunting trips. I ran into them at the convenience store just the other day; it's run by a man named Murphy."

Will interrupted to ask, "How long ago exactly?"

"Oh, pff," he blew a breath through tight lips as he thought, "four, five days?"

Will exchanged a look with Jack before saying, "We need to talk to Murphy."

They high-tailed it to the convenience store, Jack saying, "Talk about convenient," as they parked.

"You're telling me," Will replied, jumping out of the car to rush inside. It was the average ma-and-pa style store, carrying only the necessities for items that could easily be forgotten or misplaced. A humble looking man, short and rotund, sat behind the counter reading a newspaper. He looked up over his small, square glasses when the door jingled, signifying customers.

"Hullo," the man who was presumably Murphy said as the bell rang again, Jack entering behind.

"Mr. Murphy, I'm agent Will Graham, FBI," Will held out his badge, Murphy's expression turning somber. "This is agent Crawford. We have some questions about some customers you might have had recently."

"Well sure, ask away," Murphy folded the paper over his lap to give Will his undivided attention.

Jack approached and said, "We were informed a man with a daughter shopped here four or five days ago. She would have been young, with dark hair and pale skin."

"Ah, yes. Young Abigail," Murphy smiled. "A sweet girl."

"You know them?" Will pressed.

"They always stop in to my store. I see them every couple months. The Hobbs family."

"Who is her father?" Will asked, growing more anxious with each passing second.

"Garret Hobbs, I believe is his name."

"Do you know where they stay when they visit here?"

"I think he mentioned something about a summer home just up the road. My guess would be he rents a cabin on the lake."

"Thank you for your time, Mr. Murphy," Will said, already heading to the door.

"Please, just Murphy is fine," he replied with a pleasant smile.

"Thank you," Will repeated as he practically threw himself back into the car, Jack close behind. It was simple enough to find the campground, a large archway reading 'Spring Hollow' spanned over a gravel road which split into two directions. At the fork, a small building somewhat like a toll booth stood, manned by an elderly woman who stood upon seeing them. Jack rolled his window down and pulled up beside the booth, showing her his badge and asking, "Ma'am, I need to know if there is a cabin rented out to a Mr. Hobbs."

"Uh, let me see," she bustled into the booth and rifled around until she found a binder. She opened it and began scanning through the names. Each passing second was torture for Will; he tapped his foot impatiently until at last she said, "Yes, there is a Mr. Garret Jacob Hobbs in cabin eleven," and pointed down the right path.

"Thank you," Jack said, driving off.

The car had trouble stopping on the gravel, but they found the cabin easily enough. It looked to be larger than the one the pentagram was in, probably two bedroom at most. There was a car parked outside it. Someone was home.

Jack took out his pistol as he left his car, Will following suit. Jack said, "I'll check perimeter." Will nodded and ran up to the door. He tested the lock, finding it open. The killer probably hadn't been anticipating their stroke of luck. He was relieved when the door opened quietly, holding his gun at the ready as he stepped into the cabin. His eyes swept the interior, noting another deer head above the fireplace with two comfortable looking arm chairs situated in the living room. He heard a muffled gasp come from the kitchen, which he assumed was through the archway straight ahead.

Will took careful but quick steps to the arch, holding up his gun. He saw a man with his head bent down to a girl's ear; she was standing in front of him, and he had one hand on her shoulder. His other hand held a knife to her throat.

"Freeze," Will commanded, but it was too late. Time seemed to slow as Hobbs slashed the knife across the girl's neck. She gasped, locking eyes with Will as she began to fall. Out the window behind the kitchen sink, Will glimpsed a pair of antlers. In that moment, his finger pulled the trigger. Then it pulled it again. And again. And again. Shot after shot ran out through the enclosed space until Hobbs staggered back and collapsed against the counter, sliding to the floor.

He looked up to Will and rasped, "See?" Will stood rooted to the spot as Hobbs spoke again, "See?"

Will wasn't sure what prompted him to move, but he broke out of his reverie to kneel by the girl. He pressed a hand to her neck to try to staunch the flow of blood gushing from the wound. A moment later, Jack burst into the house after hearing the gunshots, making a call on his phone that Will didn't hear. He was too busy watching the life pour from Abigail's injured neck. He whispered, "Sorry," as he tried to still his frantically beating heart, unsure if he was apologizing for killing her father, or for not being there sooner.

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The ambulance had taken Abigail away in what they had reported was a stable condition to the FBI. Will sat in Jack's office, staring off into space. His expression was stony, jaw set, refusing to make eye contact with his superior officer. Jack was a patient man, not prompting Will to talk about it. Not yet, anyway. Jack finally broke the silence between them, saying, "I've taken the liberty of...calling a psychiatrist for you."

"A what?" Will asked dryly.

"Will, you just killed a man. You must be shaken up about it."

"It had to be done."

He could tell Jack was watching him steadily. "That doesn't mean it isn't something you might need to talk about."

"I could have just talked with you."
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Jack shook his head, "I can't give you the help you need, Will. I know that recently, this job has been taxing on you."

"To say the least," Will admitted quietly.

Jack nodded, "I at least want you to meet him. The final decision to become his patient, I'll leave to you."

"Thanks," Will replied wryly. He had never been fond of the idea of therapy. He'd been relatively fine coping on his own for the past few months; the thought of spilling his problems onto someone else seemed wrong of him to do, even if it was their job. He justified it up until that point by considering that other people probably had worse problems than his own.

Jack's back straightened as someone entered the room. Will didn't turn to see who it was, assuming that it was-

"Doctor Lecter," Jack grinned, gesturing to the seat beside Will.

"Agent Crawford," the man apparently called Lecter responded, immediately sending a chill up Will's spine. He knew that voice. Will slowly turned to look at him, finding a tall man in a suit looking back down at him. He had his hair neatly combed to one side. His face was gaunt, a smile crinkling his eyes. However, there was something sinister in his gaze that sent Will's heart racing. But if he noticed any of Will's abrupt hostility, he didn't show it. He said, "You must be Will Graham. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Chapter End Notes

I realized too late I forgot to mention in the notes of the last chapter that you'll probably find quotes from the show integrated into this story; mind you, I won't rip off dialogue without trying to reference what episode it came from!
Let it also be known I do not live in Virginia, so while I did borrow the lake name from an actual lake outside of Salem, the scenery is entirely made up.
*EDIT: holy shit I forgot to name this chapter on the day I posted it, woopsie doodle

Bon Appétit

Chapter Notes

> ha I should be reading something for class right now but who wants to do that when there's fanfiction to be written?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

If Will had intended to respond, the words got caught in his throat. He'd never met Dr. Lecter before, but then how had his voice been in Will's dream from the previous night? Even as he wracked his brain for possible answers, averting eye contact, the older man pulled the chair beside Will back with an air of what could almost be amusement. He sat elegantly, lowering himself into the seat with the languid movement of a cat. In the same moment, he crossed his right leg over his left knee and folded his hands in his lap, back remaining erect. Will watched all this happen through his peripheral vision; there was something otherworldly about the way Dr. Lecter held himself, unless he actually just had a stick that far up his ass.

Dr. Lecter turned to Will, evidently expecting a response to his greeting. Will stiffly turned his head a fraction towards the psychiatrist to say, "Hello," and immediately fixed his gaze back on Jack's desk.

Jack said, "Thank you for coming, doctor."

"Please, I believe we're all of the same social standing to be on a first name basis. Hannibal will do," Hannibal smiled.

Even after only hearing the entity from his dream speak four words, it wasn't difficult to tell Hannibal's accent and silken tone matched it flawlessly. The more he spoke, in fact, the more Will began to feel like Hannibal was an old colleague, as if they'd met years ago and were long-lost friends. This sat unwell with him. He was slow to trust people; it was never their fault, but he often spent more time psychoanalyzing people rather than actually bothering to get to know them. God forbid he become friendly with anyone.

Jack nodded, oblivious to Will's wandering mind as he replied, "Well then, Hannibal, he's all yours."

The wording made the corner of Hannibal's mouth twitch into a subtle smirk, "I do thank you for bringing him to my attention." He swiveled his torso without unfolding his legs to face Will more directly, "I hear that you've been undergoing a troubling time in your career."

Will turned his head less than the first time to say, "That's one way to look at it."

Hannibal raised a brow and cocked his head a fraction. He gave Will a brief once-over, "You're not overly fond of eye contact, are you?"

Will wasn't in the mood to explain his distrust of Hannibal. He wasn't in the mood to admit that he was afraid if he actually looked into Hannibal's eyes, he'd be back in the dream, trapped again in whatever hellish landscape he'd heard Hannibal's voice in the first time. And he definitely wasn't in the mood to admit that even for all his unease, he had to admit: the doctor cleaned up nice. He slowly began to rotate, eyes taking the longest to actually snap onto Hannibal's face. Once there, it was particularly difficult to tear them away, but not because Will was sucked back into a dream. It was the unwavering focus that Hannibal was giving him. Not just studying his eyes, Will noticed, but also flicking his gaze to observe whether Will's foot was tapping (it wasn't) or if he had other nervous ticks (he didn't). Will was almost always calm in the face of danger. But why he felt that right now he was in a moment of great peril, he was uncertain.

"Eyes are distracting," he finally replied, managing to look away. "You either see too much, or you don't see enough."

Hannibal kept his gaze on Will as he replied, "You're afraid of misinterpreting people, perhaps. Jumping to conclusions when there's not enough evidence to draw them. You want to trust your own instincts, because if you can't rely on your gift of empathy to accurately let you see into another's mind, who else is there to fall back on?"

This time, Will didn't hesitate to look back at Hannibal. The expression on Will's face was quizzical yet wary; he'd hit the nail on the head. In fact, Will felt a flare of anger that Hannibal had so accurately managed to describe what few others seemed to understand in so short a time. Not to mention that very concern was at the forefront of Will's mind as he tried to assure himself there had to be a reason he had such instant mistrust for the psychiatrist. "Are you psychoanalyzing me?" he asked.

"I must apologize, Will. Observing is what we do. I can't shut mine off any more than you can, yours."

Throughout this exchange, Jack wore a smug grin as he leaned back, practically patting himself on the back for a job well done in finding such a suitable therapist for his employee. Will narrowed his eyes and replied, "You consider yourself an empath?"

"Of sorts. I doubt my gift is as refined as yours, though I do have a knack for understanding people," Hannibal smiled. "It's part of my job."

Will was still tense but gradually began to relax, by now nearly forgetting his original concern with his recognition of Hannibal's voice. After a moment, he nodded, "I think...I might need someone like that."

Hannibal's smile broadened, "It helps to have people who understand others like you do."

"I imagine it does," Will said softly. If nothing else, maybe getting to know Hannibal would help ease his mind. Maybe it'd help him solve the mystery of the dream, or sever the connection between the voice and Hannibal, thereof. "So," he mirrored Hannibal by folding his hands in his lap, "when do we start our sessions?"

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Hannibal's office was extravagant, even by psychiatrist standards. Will wasn't sure what he'd been expecting, but it certainly hadn't been an ornate wooden desk situated in a two-story library. Hannibal owned a wealth of books which lined the upper floor of the room; a ladder provided access to the book cases above, a mezzanine ringing three of the four walls, the fourth overtaken by two large windows lined with deep red-and-white striped curtains. There were two leather chairs facing one another which were low to the ground but still looked comfortable. There was also a chaise lounge chair between the two windows, and for some reason Will couldn't help feeling the leather chairs were used more often. Behind the central large desk was a smaller one littered with papers, the content upon which Will couldn't see from the door. As he entered the room, Hannibal waited patiently for him to fully enter before closing the door behind him. Will instinctively turned at the sound, eyes settling on the iron statue situated between the door and an armoire: a stag with its head held high.

"Welcome," Hannibal gestured towards the chairs. "Make yourself at home."

Rather than sit down right away, Will took a moment to peruse, mostly to try to ease the apprehension which had formed at the sight of the stag. He said, "Thank you," without turning. He meandered over to the secondary, smaller desk, finding that for the most part, the papers on it were sketches. He didn't fail to notice the scalpels laying side by side with pencils. He refocused on the content of the pictures, asking, "Are these yours?"

"Yes," Hannibal replied, taking off his jacket and hanging it on a coat rack by the door.

"The detail is...impressive," Will said after floundering for a word that could adequately describe the meticulous level of detail in the drawings.

"Thank you. I enjoy portraiture; I often find sketching the human figure makes for a relaxing pastime," Hannibal explained as he sauntered over to stand besides Will.

Will took a step sideways to keep a little distance between them. Hannibal didn't seem to notice, or at least didn't try to close the gap again. Will asked, "Do you draw patients?"

"No," Hannibal traced a lithe finger along the folds of drawn fabric draped over a figure, "sometimes I draw my interpretations of such characters as Patroclus and Achilles, among others. Certainly, my inspiration is not solely based on Greek heroes."

"Right, sure," Will replied, only half listening. He finally stepped away from the desk and headed for the chairs, getting the keen impression that Hannibal was keeping a fixed eye on his back. He sat down and grabbed the arms of the chair as he lowered himself into the seat, leaving his arms propped up and drumming his fingers in a line. He took a deep breath and turned his head, somewhat relieved to find Hannibal hadn't remained in the same spot but had followed him. Will watched Hannibal fold himself into the seat across from him in the same liquid movement he'd seen in Jack's office. He remained silent, eyes on Will as per usual. When he started getting uncomfortable with the silence, Will said, "I feel inclined to let you know that therapy doesn't really work on me."

"It doesn't work when you don't let it," Hannibal said evenly. "Therapy works best when the patient is willing to participate."

Will frowned a bit, "Participate?"

"It's a two way street, Will," Hannibal clarified. "You tell me what troubles you. I give you what method of treatment I believe is in your best interest. It's up to you whether to follow my advice."

"If I wasn't willing to participate, wouldn't I not be here right now?"

"Yes, but not necessarily. You can show up with no intention of listening to what I have to say." Will nodded--he had a point. Hannibal continued, "So, why don't we start with the basics. Why do you feel you are here?"

"I'm here because Jack Crawford thinks I need therapy," Will drawled, looking towards the window.

"What you need is a way out of dark places when Jack sends you there," Hannibal reiterated. Will glanced back to him with a furrowed brow of curiosity. "Jack told me that your job is unique. He's more easily able to apprehend criminals when you're there to help find them. This is good for him; so good, he is willing to ignore how unstable it is making you become."

"I don't know if I'd go so far as ignoring," Will said, though he sounded uncertain even to himself.

Hannibal didn't look convinced, either. "You are a pure empath. It's a rare gift, and a troubling one."

"I usually chalk it up to my vivid imagination."

"Chalk it up to what you wish. That doesn't change the fact that you empathize so completely with the killers you're helping to track down that you're afraid you're losing yourself within them."

"How did...how do you know about that?" Will asked, not realizing he was gripping the arms of the chair a little tighter.

"I can see it in your eyes," Hannibal said, face carefully emotionless, "although, the report Jack gave me helped me work it out, as well," he added with a grin.

Will released his breath at the joke. It hadn't been very funny. "I'm sure it did," he mumbled. Hannibal remained quiet, so he said, "I uh...I'm here because I killed my first victim, recently."

At this, Hannibal looked intrigued. He sat forward as he said, "You specifically say victim?"

Will nodded. He swallowed before continuing, "He deserved it, but it still felt like murder."

"Tell me what he did, why you did it," Hannibal said, awaiting Will's response with an almost hungry look hidden deep in his eyes.

"He's been killing people. Young adult girls. He's been trying to sacrifice them to someone, or something, but his most recent victim was stolen from him. So he tried to kill his own daughter to replace the one he lost."

"And you witnessed him attempt to murder her," Hannibal finished.

"Yeah. Jack's report?" Will asked.

"Yes," Hannibal confirmed, easing back into his chair, apparently satisfied with Will's response. "Garret Jacob Hobbs was attempting to appease someone. Why do you suppose he was so determined to satisfy the needs of this...demon?"

"From what we can gather, he...I don't know," Will shook his head in thought, lifting one of his hands only to let it fall back onto the arm of the chair. "Probably thought his demon could help him with something."

Hannibal remained quiet for a moment before saying, "What if it wasn't in the hopes this demon could help him? What if he needed to appease the demon to save his own life? Perhaps he previously made a bargain he could not uphold."

Will blinked. He hadn't thought of that. Rarely did things of that caliber not cross his mind; he felt foolish for overlooking the option. "That...could explain it. Maybe he needed to trade the lives of six other girls to spare his daughter, but in the end, he ran out of time and had to kill Abigail, anyway," he ran a hand through his hair.

"People can be pushed to all manner of behavior when their loved ones are in peril," Hannibal said. "And were you not there to stop him, Abigail would be dead."

"But I still killed her father," Will said in a shaky voice. "The reason behind it doesn't matter much, anymore. It still led us to that moment, where I shot him."

"And how did shooting him make you feel?" Hannibal asked, and if Will didn't know any better, he'd have said Hannibal sounded eager.

"Killing Hobbs...felt just," Will decided.

"Often times, the easiest justification we have for our actions is believing we were right while the other was wrong. What was wrong with what Hobbs was doing?"

"He killed innocent people," Will replied easily.

"He might have been trying to save his daughter. Greedy as that may be, he found it to be in his best interest. You put yourself in his position, once. You better than anyone had the opportunity to look through his eyes and understand the motivation for his actions. In a way, you knew him, but you still stopped him. Who are we to decide right from wrong?"

"We get to decide when to put a stop to the actions of those who put other people in danger," Will said, sounding more like he was trying to convince himself.

"So you're trying to prove to yourself that the unnamed feeling you have keeping you up at night is the satisfaction of saving Hobbs' daughter, not the satisfaction of killing a cruel man. Did you really feel so bad because killing him felt so good?"

"It *wasn't* satisfying to kill him," Will corrected. "But...that doesn't mean I didn't like doing it," he said as an afterthought, more to himself.

"In other words?" Hannibal prompted.

It took a moment for Will to come to terms with it before he said in a voice barely above a whisper, "I liked killing Hobbs."

Without missing a beat, Hannibal said, "Killing must feel good to God, too. He does it all the time. And are we not created in his image?"

"You're religious, then?" Will asked, more to remove the spotlight on himself and give himself time to think.

Hannibal seemed amused by the question, "I do not fear God. I have nothing to hide from him. Nor do I think our actions in this life should have a bearing on where we end up going after it is over."

"You're becoming increasingly vague, Dr. Lecter," Will said.

"The simple answer is yes. I believe in God. But I'm not a devout follower of his. After all, what sort of leader drops a roof on the heads of thirty-four of his followers mid-worship?" Hannibal asked, head tilted.

"And...how do you think God felt about that?" Will asked, looking to meet Hannibal's unblinking gaze.

"Powerful."

Chapter End Notes

this chapter borrowed some dialogue from episodes 1 and 2, i'll try to intersperse direct quotes as much as possible. i don't want to clog so much unoriginal material into one chapter again DX but hey they were relevant quotes
there shall be action/a crime scene in the next chapter, i promise :)

Warning Signs

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will stood with his hands in his pockets, peering out the window in his living room facing his front yard. Since he'd set foot back at home after his first session, he found himself lost in thought. About Hobbs, about Abigail, but particularly about Hannibal. Killing Hobbs, along with the realization Hannibal had brought to light with regards to how Will felt about it, had already been occupying the forefront of his mind. Hannibal himself was a different can of worms altogether. More than that, he was an entire other world that existed on the surface of this one, the one Will knew. *He's only human, stop acting like he's on a pedestal,* Will scolded himself. Why was so much of his thought now devoted to his psychiatrist? He barely knew him, yet Will felt consumed by him. *Probably just has that affect on people,* Will mused.

He was shaken from his thoughts when a whine next to him intruded on his mind. He looked down to see Winston staring up at him, tail half-wagging. "Hey, buddy," Will said, removing a hand from his pocket to scratch at the dog's head. Winston's tail immediately picked up the pace, making Will smile at the thought of how destructive a happy dog's tail could be. He chuckled and scratched at Winston's ear before idly turning back to the window, his arm freezing. The stag was back.

"This isn't a figment," Will told himself as he stepped around Winston, who watched him leave with a tilt of the head. For once, the thought of his dogs was at the back of his mind. Right now, he had to prove to himself that he wasn't going mad.

He didn't even bother with a coat, not allotting himself the time. He yanked open the front door and stood on his porch, half expecting the stag to be gone again. However, it wasn't. As his automatic porch light kicked on, the stag loomed before him, in the same spot it had been from out his window. One of its ears flicked, and Will heard it snort as its nostrils flared. An urge of temptation made Will want to walk closer, but everything else screamed for him not to. Common sense, in particular, stopped him from strolling right up to the beast as though he were Snow White.

He watched it for a moment longer before asking, "What are you?" to himself.

The porch light turned itself back off after not detecting movement, and Will jolted back when the stag grunted and threw back its head, grunting loudly once more before it turned back towards the woods and began walking. Will was mesmerized; he was rooted to his porch as he watched the stag strut its way back into the forest as if in slow motion. As soon as it was out of sight, Will bolted after it. He didn't know what overcame him other than the sudden realization that he was letting his proof get away. He didn't even notice the light hadn't come back on. He stopped at the treeline, realizing he was barefoot and definitely shouldn't walk through a forest without shoes. Not that it mattered much anyway. The stag was utterly out of sight.

After staring aimlessly into the woods for a little over ten minutes, Will made his way back to the front porch, where the light flickered on as he approached the steps. Will raised a brow at the way it flashed, thinking the bulb hadn't been that old, but he brushed it off and went inside, locking the door behind him. Winston picked his head up from where he was laying on the floor in front of the door, tail thumping into action. "Yeah, I'm fine," Will answered the dog's silent question. Winston whined and licked Will's arm as Will stooped to pet him. "Okay, mostly fine," Will mumbled, half turning his head back to the door before he straightened with a yawn. He needed a good night's sleep.

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As it happened, it hadn't particularly been a "good" night's sleep. Will found himself tossing and turning most of the night, even getting up on more than one occasion to look out his window for the stag, to no avail. As he sipped his coffee the following morning, he made mental note to buy a trail camera to plant in his yard to try to catch the stag in the act before hauling himself up to make his way to the bureau. Criminals, especially the psychotic ones, didn't wait for anybody.

He opened Jack's door before knocking on it from the doorway. Jack gave Will the usual 'I'm not busy but you could still have knocked before entering' brow raise before he motioned for Will to approach the desk. Before Will could even consider asking if they had a new case file to work with, Jack asked, "So, how was your first session?"

Will said, "It was only one session, Jack," as he seated himself.

Jack gave him a small, patient smile, "I'm not asking how the treatment itself is working, just how the first meeting went."

Rather than answer, Will asked, "Where did you find Hannibal, again?"

Jack took a breath through his nose before responding, "Believe it or not, he's an acquaintance of Alana Bloom's."

"Alana knows him?"

"She suggested him to me. Says his patients generally undergo almost miraculous turnarounds."

"Is that right," Will said, looking at the board of papers and pinned up string lines to the left of Jack's desk. He narrowed his eyes as he studied the photos.

Jack followed his gaze and said, "We've got a new one," in response to Will's furrowed brow. Will stood and walked closer to the board as Jack continued, "Wouldn't you know it, we've got another summoner on our hands."

Will gingerly reached out a hand to touch the photo of a crime scene, depicting a young girl mounted via impalement on the antlers of a stag. From what little Will could glean of the surroundings where the photo was taken, it was in the middle of a field, and the grasses around the stag had been cut away so that a pentagram could be drawn into the dirt. Will's
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stomach knotted. It didn't seem like coincidence anymore that this stag kept showing up on the nights before murders were committed. Besides the photo was a printout of a missing persons flier with the face of who Will could only presume was the girl currently on the stag's head. He pushed the thought away and asked, "When was the body discovered?"

"The photo was sent in to the bureau from a pair of hikers not even an hour ago. I dispatched a team to secure the location to keep others away. They'll be taking care of questioning the hikers as we speak." Will nodded and looked back to the picture, jaw set. What he didn't expect next was for Jack to say, "I've asked Hannibal and Alana to join us on this one."

"What? Why?" Will turned back around.

"Hannibal has medical experience. Alana wanted to see you."

Will frowned, "She does?" He didn't dislike Alana by any means, but he wouldn't have even considered them friends. They'd barely ever talked. He couldn't imagine why she wanted to see him, specifically.

Jack nodded, "Mmhm. I told her you had accepted the invitation to become Hannibal's patient, to which she took great interest."

Will looked away in thought, eyes skimming over nothing in particular as his mind raced. "Well, better not keep them waiting, then."

There was already a mill of police officers buzzing around the field. Jack was wearing his signature hat and coat combo, which Will silently thought made him look ridiculous but knew nobody had the heart or balls to tell him he looked anything other than intimidating in. Will's eyes were immediately fixed on the girl. If he hadn't killed Hobbs himself, he'd have guessed this was Hobbs' work. The girl matched the profile of the ones who had gone missing by Hobbs' hand. He looked down to the ground as he walked closer, focusing on the symbols etched into the dirt. It didn't take him long to notice this was a copy of the pentagram which had been painted in blood on the floor of the cabin where Abigail had almost been sacrificed. He knelt down and pressed two fingers into one of the lines in the star, picking them back up and looking at them. They were tinged red.

Will looked around until he spotted the woman he was looking for. "Beverly," he called. She looked over from some conversation she was having with Price and Zeller, the dynamic duo almost certainly waiting to analyze the body with growing impatience. She said something else to dismiss herself before quickly moving to stand by Will's side.

"What's up?" she asked.

"Has anyone tested the soil in the lines of the pentagram yet?" Will asked.

"Yeah, and it's got a trace amount of blood."

"They're working on the DNA test?"

"Should be, the sample was sent back to the lab about twenty minutes ago."

Will nodded, "Let me know the results when they get back."

"Sure. You have suspicions?" she raised a brow.

"Plenty," Will confirmed. When it was apparent that was all he was going to say on the subject, Beverly excused herself and walked back to rejoin Price and Zeller's conversation. He took a deep breath in and shut his eyes, drowning out his surroundings. The din of the officers died down until it was just wind in the grass. The flutter of the caution tape became the fluttering of leaves in the trees.

I select this spot on a hiking trail with purpose. There's no sense in hiding what I'm about to do. I want it to be found. I start with the animal; I lay it on its stomach and tuck the legs beneath it, as if it were merely resting. I tilt the head back, affixing a rod in its throat to help prop it in place. After ensuring my pedestal won't tip over, I turn to the girl. She lays on her back, eyes shut. Were it not for the cut in her throat, she might also have just been asleep.

There can be no hesitation. I grasp her under the armpits and raise her high, almost in homage, before throwing her with some force towards the stag's head. Gravity takes care of the rest. Her sacrifice will not go unnoticed, nor shall it be in vain. I dig the lines of the pentagram into the dirt with practiced hands; I know this summoning star as I knew the one who created it. I need the one who finds my warning to know: his work is not over. This is my design.

When Will opened his eyes again, he realized with slight disgust that his hand was on the nose of the stag. He whipped his hand away, jumping as a voice behind him asked, "Purell?"

Will turned around to find Alana standing behind him. His gaze briefly flicked over her shoulder to where he saw Hannibal watching him from a distance, but he made himself focus on her, saying, "Yes, please."

She reached into her purse and withdrew a bottle, squeezing some of the germ-gel into his open hand. As he massaged it into his skin, Alana said, "You know, usually you're not actually supposed to pet the animals."

"Couldn't resist," Will replied. "How long were you...?"

"Only a minute or so."

"Ah. And before that?"

"Discussing you with Hannibal," she admitted.

"And what did he have to say about me?" Will asked with more interest than he'd meant to inflect.

Alana gave him a small smile and said, "Mostly that he's curious about you."

"Oh. Well, that makes two of us," Will said, glancing back to where Hannibal was now wrapped up in a conversation with Jack.

Alana caught him looking away and quietly said, "Will," to make him focus on her again. She looked like she was wrapped up in some internal debate before saying, "I'm sorry I can't say more now, but...be careful."

The abrupt warning caught Will off guard. "Careful?"

"Around him," she didn't turn fully, but the direction she flicked her eyes definitely indicated she meant Hannibal. "He's...let's just say I've been keeping an eye on him."

"For what?" Will asked, only forming more answers than coming to any conclusions.

"I can't get into it now. We'll talk later, but it was good seeing you," she forced a grin. Will could tell--he was no stranger to the difference between a genuine and a fake smile.

"Um...yeah, you too," he said, wondering what the cryptic message had been for as she walked away. He rubbed a hand through his hair before approaching Hannibal and Jack.

They both turned to watch him. When he was within earshot, Jack asked, "What have you got?"

"Whoever did this, it was a warning," Will answered.

"Warning of what?" Jack asked, not wasting any time.

"Hobbs' work was interrupted. This wasn't done by a fan of his, but they knew him. They must have; they used his exact summoning circle. This was a message to tell us that someone is going to continue Hobbs' work."

Jack shook his head, "Wait, someone killed this girl and mounted her in a field just to tell us there's another killer on the loose?"

"Something like that, yeah," Will couldn't help but glance to Hannibal. Hannibal was watching him with a mostly flat expression, but Will picked up on a subtle air of amusement. "Was she already dead?"

Hannibal said, "The body can't be more than six hours old, by my estimation. I haven't personally studied it, myself, but working with the information given me, I surmise this murder happened earlier this morning. The mounting would have happened probably not long after."

Will said, "Whoever did it, they wanted it to be found. There's a reason the girl matches the profile of Hobbs' victims."

Hannibal asked, "What might that be?"

"I think they're telling us Abigail is still in danger."

Chapter End Notes

who else is already tired of waiting for will to find out hannibal is a demon?
hey, me too
also recently re-watched season 3 episode 2 and i forgot they make you relive the finale of season 2 and long story short i was in Pain
there's pleeenty more of Alana coming, believe me, she's gonna play a big ole role in this story ;)

In Time

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Hannibal, you haven't answered my question," Bedelia said, her eyes fixed on him as he stood watching out the window holding a glass of wine.

His head half turned to address her, one hand in his pocket, "You know very well I'm sworn to serve you. Why the urgency in your tone?"

"Because these things do have a time limit," she replied.

He grinned, "I know very well how much time you have, Bedelia. I'm keeping count."

"You're wasting time."

He fully turned and took a drink, meeting her gaze. When the glass left his lips, he shrugged, "I never waste the time allotted to me. It will take longer than usual to get Will Graham to trust me, but he will. And when he does, rest assured, I'll hand him over to you."

She didn't look convinced, but she kept her tone carefully even as she responded, "Could it be possible you've grown a soft spot for him?"

"He's only human," Hannibal turned back to the window, swirling his glass.

"But?"

"...He interests me," Hannibal admitted. "He strikes me as the kind who becomes entirely loyal, after someone has earned his trust. And I plan to do so."

"You've already told me that will be difficult to accomplish," she walked to stand by him. "Are you sure you can accomplish it in time?"

"Naturally. Have a little faith."

"Hard to have faith in a creature who lost their own," Bedelia said with her chin tilted up a fraction, as though she'd just struck a mighty blow.

Hannibal's head rotated to look down at her, unimpressed. "Be that as it may," he slipped the hand from his pocket to slowly reach for the strap of her one-shoulder dress. The sleeve was draped over her left shoulder, and he trailed a finger along the top edge until he hooked it around the fabric and tugged down gently to expose the skin over her heart, which was starting to develop black veins. "Looks to me as though you don't have much choice in where to place your faith."

She grabbed his hand to pull it away equally slowly, "Just do your job."

He smiled, "In time."

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Hannibal said, "I want to perform a simple exercise with you, Will."

"I don't recall signing up for aerobics," Will replied.

Hannibal grinned, even though he didn't find Will's pun to be all that funny. "It's a memory test. To the best of your ability," he handed Will a notepad and pen, "I want you to sketch the pentagram you found in the field. Just what was etched in the dirt will do."

"What does this have to do with my therapy?" Will asked.

"It's more just to test a theory of mine. Please," Hannibal gestured to the notepad as he took his usual seat across from Will.

Will raised his brows briefly but crossed one leg over the other and leaned back, setting to work drawing out the pentagram he'd grown all too familiar with. He didn't fancy himself an artist, and he was only a little ashamed as he handed the book back to Hannibal, knowing Hannibal's own particularly meticulous drawing style. Hannibal took the book and didn't look at all to be judging the scribble of shapes on the paper. His eyes skimmed the page before he spoke again, "And these two instances where you saw this particular pentagram are the only times you've been exposed?"

"Yes," Will nodded. "I never really got into the whole summoning thing."

"A fairly large portion of people have. Books have been written on the subject; granted, such tomes are hard to come by. Those who believe in the power of summoning the legions of hell tend to not be very open about their discoveries."

Will rolled his eyes, "Can't imagine why."

"Why do you think?" Hannibal tilted his head.

Will glanced to him with his chin propped in his hand. The twinkle of amusement was in Hannibal's gaze, similar to the look Hannibal had given him the first time they'd discussed God. "Well, it isn't like it works. Summoning, demons, pentagrams, they're all fantasy. A con to get sad, lonely people to join cults where they're told they belong in exchange for help committing murder and using sacrifice as an excuse to justify it."

"Is that all you believe people summon demons for?"

"I mean, I suppose there's a wealth of reasons, but I wouldn't know. I've never tried."

Hannibal narrowed his eyes a fraction, "Why not?"

"When I was younger, I used to pray to God," Will said with a ghost of a smile playing at his lips. "That didn't stop Him from letting cancer kill my mother. After that, I stopped believing
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in a God who wouldn't answer my prayers, and subsequently, I stopped believing in hell and demons, too."

"Have you ever felt compelled to try, anyway?" Hannibal asked. "Clearly, for some reason or another, these killers you're after hold strong beliefs in the ability of the human race to summon demons. And, judging by how accurately you've copied the pentagram for me," he faced the notepad towards Will, "if you hadn't considered it in the past, you paid careful enough attention to detail that you might be considering it, now."

Will frowned, "I just...have a good memory, Doctor."

Hannibal didn't answer right away. At length, he said, "I see," and closed the notepad. "Out of curiosity, have you done other research in regards to this specific summoner's circle?"

"No," Will said. When Hannibal continued waiting expectantly, Will grudgingly corrected himself, "Not yet."

Hannibal grinned at that, clearly pleased to have accurately guessed Will's intentions. He leaned back in his seat, setting the notepad on the arm of the chair and lacing his fingers together to set them on his stomach, "So, you don't think these killers you're after are crazy, after all."

"I did at first," Will quickly said. "But, I don't know, something about this seems..."

"Experienced?" Hannibal offered.

Will shook his head, "Not quite. It's just...people don't put this much effort into things they have doubts about. If they so completely believe in this demon to the extent that they'll kill for it..."

"They might have something going for them," Hannibal completed Will's thought.

"Something like that," Will said, not meeting Hannibal's eyes.

The two sat in silence for a few moments. Hannibal broke the quiet air to say, "May I suggest looking into the presence of any demon hunters in the area?"

Will blinked a few times and looked to him, "Any what?"

"Where there are those who wish to control hell spawn, there are those who wish to kill them, keep them out of this world. There are lots of people who believe in demons, Will, but there is contending opinion on whether they should be used or destroyed. If you can find a legitimate exterminator, perhaps they can offer you insight into what your murderers were trying to accomplish. They'll almost certainly carry books with this particular pentagram in it."

Will mulled over the advice and said, "Thanks, I'll...I'll look into it."

"Do let me know the results," Hannibal smiled and handed Will a business card with a phone number on it. "I'll be eager to know what you find."

As Will left Hannibal's office, the doctor's advice kept repeating itself as if his mind were a broken record. *There are lots of people who believe in demons.* He couldn't believe he'd never considered that not everyone who believed in demons wanted one under their command. It made perfect sense that there would be exorcists, of sorts. That's sort of what priests did, but the way Hannibal talked made it seem like the nearest church shouldn't be his first destination. Demonic possession was more of a priest's forte, anyway, and even then, he recalled reading somewhere that not all priests could even perform exorcisms without permission. It didn't really make sense to him, but that's why he wasn't Catholic.

He ran his hand through his hair and supposed the next best thing was to look through internet ads. He stopped by a hardware store for a trail camera before he made his way home. When he opened his door, he was barraged by a pack of excited dogs, having to spend a good ten minutes scratching each of their ears and telling them all they were good boys until they finally were satisfied enough to stop pestering him and let him get to work. He popped some batteries in the new camera and read the instructions before planting it in the front yard, setting the timer and angling it towards the woods before heading back inside.

He poured himself a brandy and sat at his desk, drumming his fingernails against the glass and listening to the repeating *tink-tink-tink* as he waited for his computer to boot up. He logged himself in and searched for 'exorcist near me' before quickly backspacing and rewriting it as 'demon tracker near me.' The engine spit out a wealth of links, and Will immediately felt a migraine coming on. He took a sip of his drink and tried to ignore the possibility he was wasting his time and that all these ads would lead to dead ends. With every link he clicked on, he could feel a little more of his spirit dying. "Best demon-stopper in town!" "Guaranteed to stop demons from entering your house or your money back! **Advance pay necessary*." He had to admit, he clicked on the "Demon-B-Gone" ad solely for the laughs. These were all ridiculous; they were so obviously scams, Will couldn't believe half of them had the confidence to even keep their ads up. He wiped his hands over his face, trying the tenth link down.

The text at the top read, "Demons be Damned." He sighed at the pun, but this website at least looked a little more professionally made, so he read on. He sat up straighter as he read, "If you believe you have a lead, contact us. Our payment is in doing the world a service by tracking down and killing Hell's armies. Do not hesitate to tell us anything you deem suspicious, no matter how insignificant it may seem. We appreciate your help in this endeavor."

Will didn't see anything on the page about actually having to pay them anything. He also noticed that there was no address, only a telephone number. He figured it was worth a shot, and if whoever picked up the phone so much as said the word 'penny,' he'd hang up. Simple as that.

He grabbed his cellphone from his pocket and dialed the number on the screen, taking a drink as he waited for them to pick up. To his surprise, it was a female voice that answered, and it wasn't even an automated message. "Rack and Ruin, talk to me."

The skipping of the usual formalities caught Will off guard, "Uh...hi, I found your website."

"Do you have a demon to report?"

Will was impressed that she was being so up-front about the job. "Well, no, actually, but I was hoping you could tell me where to find you. Your site didn't-"

"I know it doesn't have our address, there's a reason for that," she interrupted. "And we don't grant personal audiences."

"Look, I'm with the FBI. I need your help deducing the reasoning behind recent murders."

There was a pause, and Will heard a muffled voice as she held the phone away from her mouth and covered the speaker. He was fairly certain he picked up on the term 'FBI agent,' meaning she was likely informing someone else of who was on the line. When she came back, she asked, "May I ask for your name?"

"Yeah, it's Will Graham. I'm a special investigator."

He noticed that she was lowering the phone before he'd even finished speaking. Once again, he heard her voice come through muffled before there were quiet indications that the phone was being passed along. When the scuffling sounds had ceased, a new female voice picked up, one Will recognized. "Will?"

"Alana?" Will's face scrunched. "Is...is that-?"

"Yes," she said. "What's going on?" she asked, a trace of panic in her tone that Will could tell she was trying to hide.

"Nothing," Will answered, trying not to dwell on why Alana was part of a demon extermination business, "but I've got a lead on my case that I need your help with."

"What sort of lead?" she asked, already sounding calmer, or at least more controlled.

"I got some intel. How many books do you have on types of pentagrams?"

"A couple," Will picked up on her confusion. "Why?"

"Because if we can find out what exactly they were trying to commune with, it might help narrow down suspects and future targets."

"And I suppose you want to take a look at those books in person?"

Will swirled his glass idly, "Your partner already said personal audiences are out of the question."

"Usually they are, but I know you. Besides, it'd be good to talk to you outside of work."

He recalled her cryptic warning to him from a couple of days prior, "Speaking of, what exactly did you want to discuss?"

"I can't say, Will. Not over the phone," Alana said apologetically. "Tomorrow, I'll find you and give you a location of a place to meet where I'll answer your questions."

"Alright," Will set his glass down, "I'll see you then."

"Good night, Will," Alana said before she hung up.

Will was reaching to pet Winston before he was even fully aware that the dog had been watching him throughout the entire conversation. He finished off his brandy and closed the computer window, remaining seated as he let himself ponder what Alana could possibly want to see him about. It didn't take him long to draw the conclusion that it was probably about Hannibal.

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Will didn't know what time to expect Alana to show up. He had to presume she meant to meet him at the office, so to the Bureau he went. He avoided Jack's office, ending up wandering to the lecture hall where he gave presentations on occasion. He strolled up to the podium and ran a hand along the wooden surface, reminiscing about his time teaching other empaths-in-training, as he liked to think of them. He didn't like sharing the gritty details of some of the cases he helped to solve, but they had to be prepared.

"You look lost in thought," Alana said from behind him.

He turned and didn't miss a beat, "Yeah, that happens when you think a lot."

"I imagine it does," Alana said with her signature half smile. "I hope the case is going well."

"No one else has died yet, so I think that's a plus."

"Oh, lots of people have died. They just haven't been worth looking in to."

Will chuckled dryly, "Cheerful."

"It's how it is. How many sessions with Hannibal have you had?"

"Two," Will replied. "Why?"

She nodded and walked up to him, then held out an envelope, saying, "Meet me here on the designated date," instead of answering.

"You don't seem to like him much for being an acquaintance of his."

"Who told you that?"

"Jack."

She didn't look surprised, "Don't believe everything you hear." She stepped closer and hugged him, which caught Will entirely off guard, but it was only to whisper, "Be careful," in his ear.

"I will be," he said softly, not sure why she was suddenly insisting on subtleties but rolling with it. She let him go and offered another small smile before she turned and left as quickly
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as she'd come. Will watched her go and briefly considered opening the envelope before it occurred to him there had to be a reason she'd given it to him in such private circumstances and that the security cameras in the room would be able to zoom on whatever time and location she'd given him. With this in mind, he folded the envelope and tucked it into his jacket pocket before going to check in with Jack as long as he was there.

When he stopped outside the office, he didn't see Jack within. He was quietly glad, as he wanted to solve the mystery that was Alana sooner than later, stopping when he heard someone call, "Will?"

He pursed his lips in the effort not to curse as he turned to the voice, seeing Beverly briskly walking towards him from down the hall. "Yeah, what's up?" he asked, masking his irritation.

"We never got the chance to share the results of that DNA test from the other day with you, the blood we found in the pentagram. Turns out it's the same blood that was in the dishes at the pentagram in Hobbs' cabin."

Will nodded, confirming his suspicions, "I figured as much."

"So whoever committed the second murder must have had access to the same cabin," she said, looking enthused about the new evidence.

"Or access to the same body," Will suggested. She raised her brows, clearly not having considered that. Will continued, "We're going to need to look into whether Hobbs had any close acquaintances."

"He had Abigail," Beverly said.

Will frowned, "Abigail is in a coma."

"I'm not suggesting Abigail killed the newest victim; I'm saying she might know something about who did."

"Then we have to keep playing the waiting game," Will said. He didn't mention he had been dying to talk to her since the day he'd killed Garret Jacob Hobbs.

"It's only a matter of time before she's up again," Beverly said, ever the optimist.

Will scratched his nose and said, "Yeah, we can hope as much. I've gotta get going, Beverly."

"Alright. We'll let you know the minute she's awake."

"I appreciate it," Will lifted a hand in a goodbye wave before taking his leave. He hurried down the steps, fingering the envelope in his pocket the whole way to his car.

He forced himself not to give in to the temptation of opening it until he got home. He pulled into the driveway and jogged up the steps of his porch, fumbling with the keys for a moment and finally unlocking the door. He let the dogs out and went in, eagerly tearing the packet open and unfolding the paper within it. The date was set for the following night at 4:00 pm. He then checked the address: 1145 Fairview Way. Will didn't recognize the street name,

typing it in on the computer and pulling up a map. He found it to be a riverside building, probably an old warehouse or run-down apartment or something of the like. He scratched his head and went to the door, standing on the porch and whistling for the dogs to return. When they had all filed in, he shut the door behind them and sat down in his armchair, the dogs crowding around his feet.

He rubbed the scruff on his jaw as he considered what could happen between now and tomorrow night. A lot, he supposed. He tapped his foot to help burn some of his anxious energy. Now that there was a definite time he would have answers by, he knew that time was going to pass a lot slower. He was bad at occupying himself. It wasn't a good fishing season, and he hated the drama of most things on television. He didn't have much to read, either. One of the larger brown dogs, Harley, nosed into his hand, distracting him from his thoughts. Will scratched Harley's head and remembered Hannibal had wanted to be informed about whether he found any actual demon hunters. He dug the card Hannibal had given him out of his wallet and picked up the phone, dialing the cell number, as it was after work hours.

Hannibal answered on the fifth ring, "This is Doctor Lecter."

"Hannibal, it's Will Graham," he said.

"Will," Hannibal said in surprise. "I didn't expect a call from you."

"I hope I'm not interrupting anything."

"Only me cooking dinner, but there's no hurry," Hannibal responded, making Will feel embarrassed for not considering that it was the time normal people ate. "Is there something on your mind?" Hannibal asked, not sounding at all upset with the disturbance.

"Actually, I wanted to let you know I took your advice. I looked into demon hunters."

"Oh?" Where a moment ago Will could hear the faint chopping of what were probably vegetables on their way to a fiery, roasted doom, now there was silence.

"Would you believe I actually found some?" Will asked, rubbing his dogs' heads in turn, as they were all now demanding the same attention he'd given Harley.

Hannibal chuckled, "I must admit, I'm impressed. I actually harbored doubts that any of them were legitimate."

"Well, I found a couple. You didn't tell me Alana was one of them."

There was an unusually long silence on the other end of the line. "Actually, she never told me," Hannibal replied.

"I mean, I can't say I blame her. She seems to want to keep a pretty low profile; I just assumed she'd have told you about it."

"The arcane arts are often scrutinized by people in my field. I doubt she thought I'd believe her, or she didn't want me to judge her line of work."

"In any case, I've set up an appointment with her to take a look at her collection of summoners' books."

Hannibal hummed, "I hope what she has to say is enlightening."

"Yeah. Well, that's all I really needed..."

"Are you free tomorrow, Will?" Hannibal asked.

Will paused a moment but said, "In the morning, yeah."

"If you'd like to discuss the matter further, I do not have any appointments tomorrow. I would be honored to host you for breakfast, or lunch if you'd prefer."

Will felt himself blush. Being invited to Hannibal's house had been the last thing he'd expected, and before he could even consider the options, he heard himself saying, "Um, sure. That'd be nice."

"Wonderful," he could hear Hannibal's smile. "I look forward to it. You can find me at 8102 Helsing Boulevard."

Will scribbled the address down on the envelope Alana had given him, as it was the nearest scrap paper he had, "Alright, I'll be by around eleven?"

"Lunch it is," Hannibal replied. "Come hungry."

"Noted. Have a good night."

"You, as well."

When Will hung up, he held the phone against his chest.

Was this a date? It sounded like a date.

Chapter End Notes

disclaimer, i pitched in the backstory of Will's mom for the sake of the plot. i don't think the show ever discussed Will's parents, so I made one up to fit the bill. and if it isn't becoming clear, I myself am not Christian, but I was raised Catholic, and I fully respect everyone's religious beliefs! I am not intending to cause any offense by writing about the Christian God the way I do; it's just for Will's character for the sake of this AU :)
ps i cannot for the life of me remember if Will's classroom thing is actually at the Bureau or at an entirely different building but it's at the bureau now!
also I found out that Bryan Fuller apparently once tweeted briefly about the "Actors" that played Will's dogs, which is where I found out about Harley, this beautiful boy:

https://twitter.com/BryanFuller/status/335218012053450753/photo/1

Le Petite Déjeuner

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will had spent the majority of the night tossing and turning. Whether it was out of anticipation for dining with Hannibal in the morning or finally getting some answers about this demon summoning mystery out of the way, he couldn't tell. Probably both. But mostly about Hannibal.

Will had never considered himself a very viable dating candidate. He reprimanded himself; he didn't know if Hannibal had asked him to lunch as a date or not. Until he knew how Hannibal saw him, it was better to just think of it as a friendly invitation. That's probably what it was, anyway. What interest could Doctor Lecter possibly hold for him?

Will groaned as he stretched out in bed, kicking the sheet off himself. He sighed as he let his muscles relax, draping his arm over his eyes to block what little light was peeking through the curtains. He frowned as he mulled over what his routine for the day should be. He opted to spend no more than two hours at Hannibal's house, maximum. Not only did he not want to overstay his welcome, but he would have to be ready to meet Alana shortly thereafter. His eyes snapped open when he realized he had never checked the trail camera since he'd set it up. He sat up feeling suddenly energized, trying not to become overly optimistic about actually finding anything, even though it was too late for that, anyway.

He combed his fingers through his hair as he opened his bedroom door, immediately hearing his dogs in the living room begin to stir. As per their normal morning routine, they all eagerly rushed into the hall to greet Will as he woke up, proceeding to follow him to the kitchen where a line of food dishes awaited. They all waited obediently as he put a scoop of food into each bowl, rushing forth when he clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth and motioned the okay. He began to brew a pot of coffee as the dogs ate, opening the door to the front yard as he waited for the pot to fill. When all the dogs had run outside, Will followed them, making a beeline for the trail camera. Winston stayed close behind him as the other dogs rushed about the yard to find their particular spots. Will crouched down by the camera, grinning when he saw the light was blinking, which indicated that photos had been taken. He sat down in the grass, scratching Winston's head as the dog lay down beside him.

The screen on the inside of the camera lit up when it was flipped open. Will waited for the first picture to pop up, which happened to be a raccoon investigating the new fixture. Will pressed the arrow which would page him through the images--another of the raccoon, one of a possum, one of what might've been a rabbit bounding by in a blurry streak. His heart almost skipped a beat on the following image, until he realized it was just a normal deer. There were several pictures of a herd of deer crossing through his yard--maybe he ought to set out a trough for corn--and then he came across a blank photo. His brow furrowed in thought. It was entirely possible the camera just snapped a picture late. He checked the time of the last photo of the deer: 2:26am. He switched back to the empty one and did the same: 12:00am.

"Huh," Will mumbled to himself. Maybe the camera was set to take experimental pictures at midnight. He continued studying the picture of his empty yard, looking for anything that might indicate the presence of the stag, but he didn't see anything out of the ordinary. He tried to suppress his disappointment as his dogs started to crowd around him, Buster bringing a stick along. Will took the stick and threw it, not surprised to see all seven besides Winston give chase. He looked back to the camera and blinked. He tilted the screen and squinted, unsure if he was seeing what he was actually seeing or if his hopeful mind was supplying what could be what he was looking for. Right behind the treeline, Will could swear he made out a large pair of antlers camouflaged into the branches of the surrounding trees, along with a pair of reflective eyes.

He grinned, saying, "Gotcha," and shut the camera again, propping it in the same position angled towards the woods. He stood and whistled, the dogs looping back for him to throw the stick again. After their game of fetch, Will rounded up the family to let them back in, where he had forgotten momentarily about his now-ready coffee. He filled the dogs' water dishes before taking care of himself, pouring a mug of coffee and sitting at the small kitchen table. He took a sip as he watched out the window, wondering what kept drawing the stag to his house. He shook it off as something to decide when he had more definitive photographic evidence and set about getting dressed.

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Will was hardly ever the type to actually show up on time anywhere. Usually when he gave a specific time of arrival, it wasn't uncommon for him to be anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour late. However, this time he was quite prompt, parking at eleven o'clock in front of what looked more like a small mansion than a house. Will had never desired to live in such an extravagant style; it didn't fit him. He was much better suited to the small-house-on-a-large-plot-of-land life. He was cozy where he lived, but this house looked outright intimidating. He double checked the address before even daring to approach the steps to the door. If he had the address wrong, or if Doctor Lecter had purposefully given him the wrong location, he wasn't sure if he'd turn and flee or die of awkward social interaction on the spot. He hesitated again before forcing himself to be a goddamn adult and ring the doorbell.

The few seconds it took for the door to open felt like hours, but it was a relief to see that Hannibal was indeed the one on the other side of the door. His expression lit up when he saw who it was. "Will, right on time," he smiled, stepping aside and motioning for Will to enter. Will was quietly glad he'd made a good first impression by being prompt. He was already feeling outshone by Hannibal's outfit alone; there wasn't a sign anywhere on him that he might have just been cooking.

As Will stepped in, he couldn't help but admire the decor, which was just as grandiose as the outside. It was then that Will finally had time to focus on the delectable scent wafting in from somewhere in the house. Well, obviously it was coming from the kitchen, but Will had no way to be sure what direction the kitchen was in. Hannibal seemed to pick up on Will's curiosity, saying, "Please, come in. Brunch is just about done. Can I get you something to drink?"

Will shrugged, "I had coffee."
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"Not my coffee," Hannibal replied with a small smile as he led the way down a hall. Will almost entirely lost track of what Hannibal was saying at they entered the kitchen; it looked like it belonged in a professional restaurant than in a house. "I prefer dark roasts in a French press," Hannibal continued, unaware of Will's awe. "There is something about French presses that can't be achieved by an average coffee pot."

"Huh, I guess," Will said, uncertain whether he should be insulted at the judgement Hannibal had insinuated towards using normal coffee pots instead of a French press like a pretentious asshole.

Hannibal didn't seem fazed by Will's indecisiveness, "If you don't care to try any, I also have a large selection of wines."

"No, more coffee is fine."

"How do you take it?" Hannibal asked, and Will detected an air of smugness about him for being able to show off his 'superior' coffee.

"Just black, unless you have a suggestion for how to properly drink French press coffee."

"There's no traditional right or wrong way for serving it, but I do recommend a little cream," Hannibal responded, "particularly as you've already had your coffee. I only recommend you take a mug at all as it pairs well with our meal."

Will nodded, "Alright, cream it is. Whatever is cooking smells amazing, by the way."

"I appreciate the enthusiasm," Hannibal said as he set two glass mugs out and picked up the coffee press. "As our main course, I've put together a simple sausage and bacon quiche with a side of garlic hash browns. For after, I've baked cream puffs and topped them with an espresso glaze."

"Wow. You didn't have to go through all the trouble..." Will started.

"Not at all," Hannibal filled the two mugs before grabbing a small porcelain pitcher of cream from the enormous fridge. "It was my pleasure. I take great pride in my cooking, and I find it only right to share it with others. Wouldn't be right to keep my talents to myself."

Will snorted softly, "I'm sure the world is all the more thankful for it."

"I should hope so," Hannibal poured cream elegantly into both mugs, not spilling a drip. Will watched the pale cream swirl into the dark coffee through the glass, refocusing as Hannibal handed one to him.

Will accepted the mug with a, "Thanks," and tried a sip, then paused. Damn it. It was really good. Who had never introduced him to French press coffee?

"Is it alright?" Hannibal asked, although his expression suggested that he knew it was more than alright.

"Yes, delicious," Will nodded. He didn't think he'd ever seen a more perfect 'cat that got the cream' expression than the one he currently saw on Hannibal's face.

Hannibal didn't say anything, simply humming in approval before he bent to take the quiche out of the lower of the double-stacked oven. He set it on the stove top as it crossed Will's mind that he didn't think he'd seen Hannibal use an oven mitt of any kind, but as soon as Will saw the dish, his mouth was watering, all thought of the oven mitt gone. He never took the time to make himself anything fancier than chicken soup, and that was only when he was sick. He vaguely wondered if Hannibal cooked this way for himself all the time. He refocused when Hannibal removed a muffin tray from the upper oven and began to speak again, "I urge you to eat at much as you like. If you enjoy it, you can take the leftovers home."

Will blinked. "Oh, I couldn't possibly," he said as he realized the muffin pan slots were filled with small portions of baked hash browns, the tops crispy and golden.

"I must insist. You look like you could do with some extra meals," Hannibal grinned. He gestured to the table which was already set and said, "Please, sit."

Will felt his throat go dry as he nodded and followed Hannibal's instructions. He sat at the table and took another drink of coffee, trying to figure out if Hannibal was just a genuinely giving guy or if he was being a little too generous. Hannibal brought the quiche over and served Will a triangular slice with a specially shaped metal tool that Will would have assumed was for serving slices of pie. Hannibal then scooped out a perfectly portioned cylinder of hash browns and placed it besides the quiche, not serving himself until Will's plate was situated.

It didn't seem right to take a bite of anything until the one who'd cooked it had, but Will found that Hannibal was watching him, probably awaiting a reaction. Will forced himself to pierce the quiche with his fork and take a bite, having to take a moment to absorb the explosion of flavor that had just found its way into his mouth. "Oh my God," Will said, forgoing table manners and speaking before remembering to swallow. Every other quiche he was ever going to have in his life would be sub-par now. Not that he usually went for quiche on a menu, but this was easily the best breakfast he'd ever had in a long time. While a moment ago he'd have felt bad for taking the leftovers with him, now he was anxious to keep them.

Hannibal smiled, "I'm glad you like it," before he finally helped himself.

Will picked out a bit of sausage from his slice of quiche to try it without mingling with the rest of the flavors. He hummed a brief, "Mmm," as he chewed, unable to figure out what type of meat it was, because if it was pork, it was from the best damn pig he'd ever had the pleasure of eating. "What kind of sausage is this?" he asked when he gave up trying to figure it out.

"Venison. I find deer meat is more exquisite both in flavor and texture."

Will raised a brow, "You don't hunt?" He was finding it physically impossible to imagine the doctor in hunter's safety orange.

"No, I certainly don't," Hannibal chuckled, "unless you count hunting for specific meats."

"Sort of. Your uh, palate is much more refined than mine," Will said before taking another mouthful, trying to make himself savor it.

Hannibal looked amused, "I do have an extensive palate. I began teaching myself to cook a long time ago."

"It paid off," Will said before taking a drink of coffee to wash everything down. He tried a bite of hash browns, which were equally as delicious as the quiche, leaving Will wondering if there was anything Hannibal didn't know how to cook.

"Thank you," Hannibal said. "Now then, enough about my cooking. How have things been going for you and your investigation?"

It was a little surprising to hear that Hannibal wanted to discuss the murder case. Will said, "Not much has changed since the last time we talked about it. I'm set to meet with Alana," he barely managed to stop himself from adding 'later tonight.' He prayed Hannibal hadn't noticed the slight pause before he continued, "Hopefully she can give me something enlightening about the whole ordeal."

"Mm, yes," Hannibal nodded, taking a bite without appearing to have noticed any hesitation. He dabbed at his mouth with a napkin, even though there wasn't a crumb to be found on his person; Will couldn't help but compare it to television ads where women shaved already hairless legs. Hannibal said, "With any luck, this new killer of yours trips up somewhere along the line."

"I'm not banking on it," Will replied through a mouth of potatoes. "They'll probably be as careful as Hobbs was."

"Speaking of Hobbs, have you heard anything about Abigail?" Hannibal asked.

Will shook his head with a frown, "Still unconscious, to my knowledge."

"Perhaps she'll wake up today. You never know with such comas."

"Guess we'll see."

Hannibal watched Will's face evenly before giving a curt nod and agreeing, "We'll see. Let me know when she wakes, would you?"

"Of course."

Will ended up helping himself to a second portion. Their conversation drifted back into what could be seen as an entirely normal discussion, as if they were old friends catching up after not seeing one another for years. Will couldn't remember the last time he'd felt so at ease in the company of anyone who wasn't his dogs. By the time Hannibal had packaged up the leftovers, Will realized they had nearly spent his two hour time limit. He felt like he'd only been there for thirty minutes tops. He felt a bit bad, but Hannibal didn't seem at all annoyed by Will's presence. In fact, he seemed upset to be seeing Will off.

"I must thank you again for coming," Hannibal said as the pair made their way to the front door just before one o'clock. "I do hope you can make it again sometime."

"Assuming it will be as good a meal as this one, you can count on it," Will said, mentally slapping himself for sounding like he was inviting himself over.

The comment didn't seem to upset Hannibal in the least, "By all means. The next time you're free, my kitchen will be open to you."

"I appreciate it. Everything," Will clarified. "It was nice."

"The pleasure is mine," Hannibal said with a sanguine smile. "I hope the rest of your day goes well."

"You, too," Will said as he stepped out the door, half waving as it was shut behind him. It took every ounce of his concentration to not melt down the steps, and it took even more discipline to not turn around and knock again just to buy himself more time. There would be other opportunities, he reminded himself. And after all, Hannibal was his psychiatrist. He was positive there were rules against dating patients. Was he seriously considering the possibility of dating Hannibal already? *Get a hold of yourself, Graham,* he thought as he returned to his car.

He had a couple of hours to kill before he had to go see Alana, leaving him wondering how to fill the gap. He was tempted to stop in to the bureau, but he also didn't want to get caught up in another crime scene just in case he got his expected phone call about Abigail. He could just go back home, but while he was already in town, he didn't want to travel out to Wolf Trap and back in a manner of hours. As he pondered his options, head resting against the window and gazing at Hannibal's house, he felt his phone buzz. *Shit, fuck,* Will jumped, hoping it wasn't a call from Hannibal wondering why he was acting like a stalker still in his driveway. Thankfully, it wasn't Hannibal's name on screen--it was Beverly's.

Will swiped the screen to answer, "Hello?"

"Will, it's Beverly," she responded. "I have good news."

It took every fiber of his being not to jump to conclusions, "What sort of news?"

"Abigail is awake."

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Will had started towards the hospital before his conversation with Beverly had even been wrapped up, not that they talked for much longer after, anyway. Will peeled into the parking lot and was briefly tempted to honk at an elderly woman who decided to cross the parking lot in front of him until he realized what a dick move that would be. She waved in thanks and Will tightly smiled and waved back before continuing on his way to find a spot.

Once he was parked, he jogged across the lot, making himself walk once he was in the building. He inquired about a visitor's pass, already acquainted with which room Abigail
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would be in thanks to Beverly's instructions. It struck him in the hall that he didn't want to face Abigail alone. He had killed her father; who knew how she would react to him visiting? He stopped to consider, remembering that Hannibal had said to tell him when she was awake. *Well, he's been pretty available so far,* Will thought, trying his luck and taking out his phone. He texted Hannibal to let him know that Abigail was awake and, if he had no other obligations, he was welcome to join him in the visit. He felt an overwhelming sense of relief when Hannibal replied, *I'll be there shortly.*

Will went back to the front desk to let them know Hannibal was coming and that he'd be visiting with him. When they were informed of the clearance they were to give Hannibal, Will made his way back down the hall of rooms, sitting outside the correct one. He heard muffled voices inside, most likely the doctor going through the usual list of questions for patients who had just come out of a coma. He crossed a leg over his knee and idly kicked as he waited. He managed not to look up at anyone passing by until he picked up the unmistakable gait of Doctor Lecter from his peripheral vision; Hannibal carried himself in such a distinguished way that he was hard to miss.

Will stood when he was close enough, Hannibal saying, "What a stroke of fortune this is."

"I know," Will looked to the door. "I honestly hadn't been holding out much hope."

"Sometimes it pays to be optimistic," Hannibal said and nodded to the door.

Will took a deep breath and knocked before entering the room. Abigail was hooked up to the usual array of IV bags and monitors, a large gauze patch stuck to her neck where her father had tried to slit her throat. Will's attention then turned to the second person in the room, who he immediately recognized as certainly not a doctor.

A woman with curly red hair sat at the foot of Abigail's bed. She turned to look over her shoulder as Will entered the room, looking unimpressed until Hannibal entered behind him. Will could have sworn he actually saw her pupils dilate. She casually reached into her pocket, and judging by the movement of her fingers through the material, she was either holding a bottle of pepper spray or possibly rubbing a rosary. Will cleared his throat and said, "Hello. I'm-"

"Will Graham. The unofficial FBI agent," she answered for him. She turned back to Abigail and said, "He never passed screening."

"I'm sorry, who are you?" Will asked.

The redhead stood and used her free hand to slip a notepad into her inner chest pocket, her other hand still occupied in her outer jacket pocket. She said, "I'm afraid that's none of your business."

Hannibal said, "Don't fret Will, I can tell you. This is Freddie Lounds, if I'm not mistaken. Author of a certain TattleCrime page, isn't it?"

She straightened her back, "And you're Hannibal Lecter. Your psychiatric methods have undergone some scrutiny in the past, have they not?"

Hannibal narrowed his eyes, "I must ask you to leave the room, miss Lounds."

Will was looking between them. He'd heard of Freddie at work plenty of times; he had no idea why he had never known what she looked like, or how Hannibal had any idea who she was. Why she'd be here to interview Abigail was beyond Will.

Freddie said, "Very well," and withdrew her hand from her pocket. While Will had expected some sort of weapon, she pulled out a business card and held it out towards Abigail, "If you ever want to talk-"

Before she could continue, Will snatched the card from her hand. Freddie gave him a cold look before her eyes trailed back to Hannibal, who was acting so uncharacteristically defensive that Will was trying to discern what sort of relationship, if any, Hannibal ever had with Freddie to warrant such behavior. Freddie didn't say another word, brushing past them quickly to leave. When the door shut, Will cleared his throat to try to ease some of the tension in the air.

"Abigail," he started, "this is Doctor Lecter. Do you remember me?"

Abigail had looked as lost as Will felt throughout Hannibal and Freddie's interaction, but now that Freddie was gone, Abigail had regained her composure. "Yeah, I do," she responded. "You killed my dad."

Chapter End Notes

for starters, i'm sorry for my absence :(i just finished up with school and i've been settling back in to life at home so i've finally got lots of time on my hands to update fics!!
in other news, i've started a tumblr side blog to spread my full-length fics from here but also to write a series of one-offs for a variety of fandoms, including this one! i just wrote my first ficlet for hannibal last night and will link it below; feel totally free to message my blog or leave a comment to give me suggestions for any short stories you would like to see!! thanks for the patience and the reads!

https://tracies-tales.tumblr.com/post/173758433967/in-the-moonlight

Misinformation

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will stiffened at the abrupt accusation. He thought he'd been prepared to meet Abigail face to face, but her tone broke through his confidence like a hot knife through butter. He found he had trouble making eye contact with her, saying, "Yes. I'm...sorry about that."

Abigail studied him evenly, letting him writhe in the tense air of the room before she said, "Don't be. He probably deserved it," and lifted a hand to touch the gauze bandaging her throat.

Will raised a brow at her seemingly nonchalant response. He turned to peer over his shoulder at Hannibal, and the sight of the psychiatrist boosted his resolve. He steeled himself and walked closer to the edge of her bed, "He did some bad things, but that doesn't mean he was a bad person."

"So suddenly killing people doesn't make you a bad person?" Abigail said coldly.

A frown tugged at the corner of Will's mouth, "Did...you know about them?"

To his relief, she shook her head, "Not until Freddie informed me of the situation. Guess I should have seen something like this coming."

"Why's that?" Will asked, hoping she wasn't about to say anything that might paint her as a knowing accomplice.

"Dad had been into occult stuff recently," she shrugged. "Read books about spirits and stuff. Even watched a few of those ghost hunting shows," she rolled her eyes and looked towards the window. "He went to church every Sunday. Kinda funny that a murderer can quietly sit in a chapel of God without remorse, don't you think?"

Will slowly lowered himself to sit at the foot of her bed, "I don't...think he was without remorse."

"How do you know?" she looked back to him. She looked relatively unfazed by the topic of the conversation, which didn't bode well.

"Whatever drove your father to kill those girls, Abigail, it wasn't because he had fun during the process. I think he did it to protect someone else. Someone he must have cared a lot about."

Abigail's eyes fell to her lap, "If he cared so much, why try to kill me?"

Before Will had a chance to think up an appropriate response, Hannibal saved him the trouble by saying, "Because he made foolish mistakes."

Will carefully contained a wince; Hannibal always had a way with words, so it was surprising to hear him be so insensitive while the loss of her father was still so fresh. Abigail knit her brows and gave him a firm look, "What do you mean?"

Hannibal strode forward to stand beside Will, "He loved you, Abigail. Of that there is no doubt. But if he did not wish to risk your safety, he would never have begun to dabble in such arcane arts. His belief in an otherworldly being drove him to bargain with one. The moment he made that bargain, he had given his life away, traded it like giving the key to your house to a burglar. His obsession with pleasing this creature drove him mad, sent him on a downward spiral from which there was no return. What he didn't know was he was dragging you with him." He slowly set a hand on her shoulder, "Your father was no monster. I know what monsters are. And Will and I, we're going to protect you from them."

The room was silent for a moment as Will and Abigail absorbed Hannibal's words. Even though Hannibal danced around the point, Will saw through his bedazzled speech. Hannibal had never denied the existence of the demon that Hobbs had been trying to appease. He filed that away to ask him about later as Abigail nodded slowly. She asked, "Do you feel obligated to? You weren't even there."

Will turned his head a fraction to gauge Hannibal's response. Hannibal's face was as carefully composed as always, down to the last muscle. He replied, "I feel an incredible amount of obligation. Not only to help Will recover from the taxation killing your father has had on him but also to help you move on without a father figure. I believe your relationship to Will," here he glanced over and caught Will watching him, locking their eyes together, "shall have a staggering affect on the rest of your lives." Will narrowed his eyes; he could have sworn Hannibal had placed an emphasis on the prefix "stag." Hannibal continued, "It is important for you to realize, Abigail, that you are not your father. You do not have to believe in what he believed in; you are free to choose your own path as you see fit."

There was an unspoken understanding in the way Hannibal spoke which made Will feel like he was missing something. Abigail felt it, too--the feeling Hannibal knew more than he was letting on. Then again, Will almost always had that feeling at their therapy sessions. It took an extra moment before Abigail replied, "I know," calmly. Will was quick to note that she had suddenly regained her icy composure, meeting Hannibal's eyes steadily. It sometimes occurred that people were at their most outwardly calm when they were the most nervous.

Hannibal grinned and peered down at Will as though offering for him to take the reigns of the conversation again. Although how Hannibal expected Will to follow up on that performance, Will was unsure. He started by clearing his throat and then said, "Not being able to protect you scared him. And...apparently he thought killing you himself would be merciful compared to what would happen if you got into the hands of this demon of his."

She seemed to stare at nothing as she pondered that for a moment. "So...I should be grateful to him?"

Hannibal said, "You may feel whatever you will towards him. It is ultimately up to you to decide that killing six others in exchange for you was an act of love for you or fear for the demon."

"Alright," she responded. She fell silent again before looking to Will, "Can I ask you something?"

"Of course," Will responded as he straightened up subtly.

"How did it feel to kill my dad?" she asked with that same firm gaze, the facade that told Will she was almost scared to hear the answer.

Will didn't respond right away. He could feel Hannibal's stare piercing him. "I didn't...feel anything at the immediate moment," Will replied carefully. "I just knew it had to be done. I'm only sorry I didn't pull the trigger a moment sooner, to avoid..."

"Yeah," Abigail shifted and broke their eye contact again.

Hannibal softly said, "Abigail, you've been through a very traumatizing experience. We'll let you rest again."

"I don't want to rest," she said thickly. "I'm...worried about nightmares," she admitted as an afterthought.

"We'll help you fight the nightmares, but I'm afraid there's no such thing as fully recovering from something like what you went through," Hannibal said. "There is only moving forward, and finding the strength to do so."

She cracked a fraction of a smile, "Thank you."

Hannibal returned the smile fully, "You're welcome. Come on, Will," he nodded to Abigail and turned back to walk to the door.

Will stood slowly and took out a notepad and pen, scribbling down his phone number and handing it to her. "In case you ever want to talk," Will said. She took it with a silent nod and settled back. Will gave her a final glance before following Hannibal out of the room. The two walked down the hall in companionable silence. When they were nearing the doors, Will said, "That went better than expected."

"I agree," Hannibal conceded. "She harbors little to no resentment for what you did. I imagine she feels grateful you were there that day, even though it ended so horrifically."

"Yeah," Will felt his throat go dry.

It became even drier when Hannibal set his hand on Will's shoulder in a friendly yet firm clasp, "What matters is your relationship with her is mendable."

"That's easy for you to say," Will mumbled. "You're not the one doing the mending."

"I think I am, indirectly. By helping you sort through your own thoughts on the matter, it should help you to know what to tell her. I must advise that sticking as close to the truth as possible will aid in earning her trust."

Before he could help himself, Will said, "I think you ought to take your own advice, Doctor."

The grin Hannibal gave him might as well have been a knife to the gut. Hannibal said, "I always do." He checked his watch and said, "My, how the time passes. It's already four."

Will blinked, "Oh my God." Hannibal raised a silent brow in question, prompting Will to say, "I'm...late for a lecture."

Hannibal's mouth twitched into a slight smirk, "Then you had best get to it. Don't want to keep your students waiting."

Will nodded curtly and said, "Thank you for joining me, again."

"Truly, it was my pleasure," Hannibal held the door open. Will didn't bother with any farewell rituals; hugs and handshakes were too mundane when he'd be seeing Hannibal soon anyway for their next session. He was glad he'd caught himself from saying he had an appointment to get to. Alana had made her distrust of the doctor clear, and Will figured that if he mentioned he had just been with Hannibal, Alana would be forced to move their meeting date again, and that was a postponing Will wanted to avoid at all costs.

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Will pulled his car into the driveway not of a decrepit, old factory as he'd originally assumed he'd be led to, but a beautiful house in the middle of nowhere. There was a circular pull-around drive with a fountain at its center. A vast expanse of flat, picketed yard space surrounded the house, trees surrounding it just beyond the fence. Horses grazed in front of a stable built off the side of the house, which the more Will dwelled on it the more he supposed it classified as a mansion.

He stepped out of the car, still gazing up to admire the architecture. He was running about fifteen minutes late, as per usual with him. He approached the door with a sense of trepidation; he hoped he hadn't worried Alana with his tardiness. He rang the doorbell and waited, putting his hands in his pockets. The door opened to Alana who smiled at the sight of him.

"Will, it's good to see you," she stood aside and gestured for him to come in.

The inside was just as extravagant, and Will couldn't help but feel out of place hanging around people who put so much more pride into their houses than he did. "You, too," he responded as he stepped in. "Sorry I'm late."

"Don't worry about it," she shut the door behind him. "We have a lot to discuss."

"I have a lot of questions," Will shot back.

"I'm sure you do," Alana replied as she began to lead the way. "Can I get you a drink?"

"No, I'm alright."

She turned down a hall which their footsteps echoed in, "Alright. My wife, who you briefly met on the phone, will be joining us when she returns from her afternoon ride."
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The term wife only caught Will slightly off guard. He brushed over it with ease, "I look forward to meeting her. Someone so direct over the phone must be a thrill in person."

"You'll have to forgive her," Alana cast a grin over her shoulder. "She's slow to trust. I'm sure you can relate."

"Probably too well," Will mumbled as they entered an office full of book shelves. Alana shut the door behind them, then drew the curtains closed. Will's brow furrowed as he watched her bustle about, confused as to the secrecy right up until she pulled out a book which created a very un-book-like clunking noise. The book didn't pull out of the case fully, functioning like a handle and allowing Alana to swing the entire bookshelf open.

"This way," Alana motioned for Will to enter the stairway hidden behind the secret door.

Will became more acutely aware of how strange the situation was becoming the longer he was in it. All the same, he began the trek down the stairs into the basement. He flicked on a light and froze; it looked like a scene straight out of a fantasy novel. The hardwood floor was dark and had a large oriental rug covering a majority of the space. There were even more bookshelves down here, but while some contained a normal assortment of books, other shelves contained jars of dried herbs and things Will couldn't identify. One corner of the room was occupied by two desks, a paper map unrolled on one of them and a closed laptop on the other. Opposite the desks was a reading corner with two armchairs and a loveseat.

Will allowed himself a moment to take it in before saying, "What the hell?"

Alana came down the stairs behind him and sighed, "I know, it's a lot. I can explain," she gestured to the two arm chairs in the corner opposite the desks. Will continued glancing around as he made his way there, taking note of a closed door between two book cases. He sat down, Alana taking the spot on the couch across from him. She folded her hands and said, "I imagine this just raised more questions."

"Just a few," Will nodded. "For starters, when and why did you become a demon hunter?"

"I've been in this business a long time, Will. Ever since a demon tried to kill Margot, my girlfriend at the time who is now my wife, as I mentioned."

Will snorted, "You're fucking with me." When Alana didn't say anything, Will said, "Come on."

"I'm being entirely serious, Will. There's a reason I answered the phone when you called our business."

"I mean, technically your wife answered...nevermind."

Alana leaned forward, "I know how you feel with regards to all this. You find it too absurd to accept as reality. A lot of people feel that way. But there has to be a reason you're delving further into this case, and I want to help you as much as I can."

"And...I appreciate it, but just to clarify," Will leaned forward as well and made a vague motion with his hand, "you really believe demons exist? Enough to hunt them, make an entire secret underground lab dedicated to studying them?"

"I assumed you understood that when you called."

Will rubbed a hand over his face. "Look...I just need to know anything you can tell me about this," he reached into his pocket and pulled out a folded piece of paper, on which he'd recreated the sketch of the pentagram from the crime scenes he'd done for Hannibal. "I respect you know more about the lore behind summoning than me, but I can't try to pretend I'm not judging you a little bit."

"I can tell," she said as she took the paper. She frowned down at it, "You're...you're positive this is what it looked like?"

"Yeah, down to the last symbol. Trust me."

"Will, I..." she continued to study the drawing. "I know you don't believe in these things, but you should know, anyway. If Hobbs succeeded, if his ritual worked," she looked up at him, "then he's unleashed a great evil into our world."

"Why? What is it?" Will asked.

Alana stood and panned through her books, selecting one and sitting down with it as she skimmed the index. She flipped open to a page containing an almost identical copy of Will's drawing; on the following page was another drawing depicting a humanoid being with deer antlers, holding clawed hands up to reach for a hovering heart. "It's been known by many names. Some ancient cultures called it the Wendigo, a malevolent being which corrupts people into feeding on the flesh of others," Alana said. "More accurately, those who become corrupted are known as Wendigos. The demon itself which instigates the corruption..." she shook her head. "In simple terms, he's one of the seven princes of hell."

Will decided to play along and said, "So what you're trying to tell me is that Garret Jacob Hobbs was attempting to control not an average run of the mill demon, but...a prince of hell."

Alana chuckled darkly, "Control it? No. There's no controlling a prince, not without paying an extremely steep price."

"Which is what, exactly?"

Alana remained quiet for a few seconds before she said, "Bonding your soul to it."

Chapter End Notes

well. here's hoping i get my shit together and it never takes me that long to update this fic again XD

also as i write this i'm finding that slow burns are as painful for the author as I imagine they are for you all. hang in there, Will will catch up soon enough!!

Pride and Prejudice

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will ran a hand through his hair. It wasn't a gesture of worry--actually, quite the opposite. "You expect me to believe," he said, "that Hobbs was attempting to bond his soul to a prince of hell."

Alana marked the page with a piece of paper and snapped the book shut, "As a matter of fact, I don't expect you to believe it. But I do thank you for bringing it to my attention. At the crime scene in the field, I didn't pay close enough attention to detail. I'll be sure not to make that mistake again with any murders that might be forthcoming."

Will shook his head, "Alana, you know how crazy this sounds?"

"Of course I do," she gave him a small smile. "I stood in your shoes once. But if you don't like what I've already told you, you definitely won't be fond of what I need to tell you next."

Oh boy. "Which is?" Will asked.

"I have reason to believe Hannibal is the one who tried to summon that demon."

Will snorted, looking to the ground and then off to the side as he tried not to laugh, "Of course you do."

She frowned, "Even if I'm wrong, there's still something not right about him. I think he's dangerous."

"So then why did you recommend him as a therapist?" Will turned his gaze back on her.

She pursed her lips and said, "I was hoping if I could convince you to see the world as it is, you could help me catch him."

"What I'm hearing is you set me up to use me as bait," Will folded his hands in his lap.

She took a deep breath, "I'm sorry, but he wouldn't trust me if I made any direct accusations or moves against him. That, and I don't have enough solid evidence to go on."

"You *are* using me," Will sat up straighter and narrowed his eyes at her. "Look, Alana, as much as I'd love to help you, I'm not going to become some pawn in your imaginary game of 'catch the wacko summoner,'" he stood. "I appreciate the information you've given to me, but I should go."

"Will, please," Alana stood as well, though she made no move to physically restrain him. "If I'm right, you're in grave danger because of me. He could try to sacrifice you to it next. If I'd known about this, I never would have-"

"Well sending in people who don't know demons exist in the first place also seems like a bad practice," Will interjected.

Will could tell she was trying to retain her patience. "It was wrong of me to use you," she admitted, "but now you're in the middle of my 'game,' whether you believe it's real or not. The least you could do is hear about the best way to protect yourself, in case you do come to terms with the reality of the situation."

Will set his hands on his hips and didn't meet her eyes as he considered it, then nodded and said, "Just make it quick."

Alana opened the book back up to a different page than the one with the image of the pentagram. She said, "If I'm right, the clues found in the summoning circles point towards Hobbs, and possibly Hannibal, attempting to summon Lucifer."

Will rubbed a hand over his face, "What happened to a simple hell prince? Isn't Lucifer mister big bad devil himself?"

Alana had an air of amusement about her as she said, "No. Contrary to popular belief, in some traditions, Lucifer and Satan are actually two different princes. Lucifer is the prince most closely associated with the sin of Pride, which some believe to be the original sin. Satan, on the other hand, signifies the sin of Wrath."

Will nodded, attempting to at least look like he was understanding what she was getting at, "Like the seven deadly sins."

"Exactly. No doubt there have been plenty of idiots who have tried to summon the princes to fulfill various needs and desires, but very few who actually succeeded in getting something besides death out of the deal."

Will felt his next words leave his mouth as though they were being pulled from his vocal cords by an unseen hand, "Bargaining with demons comes at a terrible cost."

"It always does," Alana said.

"Alright, for all intents and purposes, let's say you're right. These demons exist, and Hobbs went fishing around and succeeded in hooking one of the biggest catches of the abysmal hoard. What now?"

Alana shook her head, "You said so yourself, Will. His ritual didn't work. My concern lies with the pentagram in the field, the warning which you claim means someone else is out there who is going to try to perfect what Hobbs could not."

"My question still stands. And please don't assume it's Hannibal."

"If the next person succeeds," she explained, "and they manage to bond their soul to it, that person's lifespan will increase drastically. The summoner who is foolish enough to bond themselves to a demon of this caliber would act as a tether for that demon. In essence, the prince will be able to remain in our world for as long as the 'host' summoner is alive. This

next bit is pure conjecture, but this is supposedly done by the harvesting of other souls, generally by ingesting the victims' bodies."

Will's nose scrunched, "It isn't enough to rip their heart out or something?"

Alana shook her head, "The soul is a delicate thing, Will. The only thing that could keep one running is the power of more souls."

"Good to know, I suppose," Will said. "You mentioned something about protection?"

"Yes. My best recommendation for you right now is to surround your bed with a ring of oil of Abramelin."

Will raised a brow, "Oil of Abraham?"

"Abramelin," Alana repeated. "To make it, use equal parts cinnamon, myrrh and galangal. When you pour the oil in a circle around yourself, it will protect you against a physical demonic attack."

"So you want me to pour this stuff around my bed to prevent a demon from kidnapping me in the dead of night?"

"Essentially, yes. You'll have to reapply it once in awhile, but until we know who's responsible for the latest murder, it would make me feel better knowing you're at least somewhat out of harm's way."

Will rubbed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose, "Alright. Where do I find that stuff?"

Alana moved to a desk and picked up a small notepad and pen, scribbling down an address and handing him the paper. "This is a trustworthy store for legitimate supplies. Some places try to sell you ingredients that aren't as potent or won't work at all, but the owners of this establishment won't try to rip you off."

Will skimmed the note and read aloud, "Red Dragon Relics," before giving her a look.

Her amusement at his skepticism got under his skin. She said, "And behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. That's from the book of Revelation, if you don't know your Bible studies."

"I do, a little," Will bristled, folding the paper and sliding it into his pocket just as he heard the bookcase creaking at the top of the stairs as it swung open.

The sound of footsteps followed not long after. Alana turned to the stairwell, "Ah, that will be Margot."

A woman Will had never met stepped into view. She had a neutral expression, her large eyes a warm shade of green and rimmed with eyeliner, her lips standing out in red lipstick. Her brown hair fell in almost perfect waves down over her shoulders. She must have gotten changed after returning from horseback riding, as Will highly doubted she had been riding a horse in the outfit she had on, which consisted of a black long sleeve shirt with thick silvery

stripes of fake gemstones and solid black slacks. Her voice was as level and firm as her gaze, "I thought I might find you down here." She stepped around Will to stand by Alana, who tucked an arm around her waist. The two shared a brief kiss in greeting, which Will adamantly didn't watch.

Alana said, "Will was actually just getting ready to leave."

Will nodded, to which Margot said, "Shame, I'd have liked to hear your story for myself."

"I'll leave that to Alana," Will replied, finding he had difficulty maintaining eye contact with her. "I'm sure she won't leave out any details. You can keep that sketch, by the way," he added.

Alana said, "Thank you, Will. I hope you come around; you could be an invaluable asset to the case."

"I already am," Will took a step towards the stairs, "just not for your side of it."

"Will, one other thing," Alana said. When Will paused and turned to look over his shoulder, she said, "I know you don't want to believe what I told you about Hannibal, but even though I think you should be around him as little as possible, I do think if you continue your therapy with him, it shouldn't cause him any alarm. I think he would be more alerted to my influence if you cancelled your appointments."

"I'll bear that in mind," Will said, not about to mention he never had any intention of cancelling his therapy with Dr. Lecter.

Margot said, "You know where to find us."

"Sure do," Will said, starting up the stairs.

He was vaguely aware of Alana saying, "Stay safe," after him, but he didn't respond. He had a lot to think about, including finding his way back out of the mansion. And about the distinct possibility his new love interest was a psychotic demon summoner.

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I pierce the skin of your backs with fishing hooks. You're already dead--poor, tormented souls. I had to end you in order to save you. I promise, I didn't kill you because I was merciless. I was merciful.

Using a short-bladed knife, I cut guidelines into the flesh. I attach fishing line to the end of the hooks with practiced hands before boring more hooks to specific points in the ceiling, connecting those on your back to those above, and with just the right amount of tugging, I allow your wings to unfurl. This is who you truly are. This is my gift to you. And now I lay me down to sleep.

Will snapped his eyes open with a shudder. He sat up in the bed of the motel room, rubbing a hand over his face. He reevaluated the two corpses hanging in front of him by the skin of their backs. This wasn't the same killer as the one from the field. But it also wasn't the killer
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they were being warned about; whoever did this posed no threat to Abigail. That was only a small comfort to Will. He looked down at his hands as though expecting to find the blood of the bodies on them, but thankfully he didn't. He shifted to sit on the edge of the bed, content with his own thoughts while Jack kept the room cleared for him.

The wings on the backs of the 'angels' were one of two things that intrigued Will; the second most notable factor was the sigil carved in each of the body's chests. It was an upside-down triangle with an X running through it, the uppermost points of the X touching the two upper corners of the triangle and running down and out through the diagonal lines. The diamond formed at the tip of the triangle was mirrored with another diamond formed by a V running through two extensions off the point of the triangle. It wasn't extraordinarily complicated, but Will had recognized it immediately. It had made an appearance in Hobbs' pentagram.

Will wasn't sure what the symbol meant once it was singled out from the rest of the design. He was only positive this wasn't the copycat because there wasn't a complete pentagram anywhere in the room. He also didn't think it was the killer they were being warned about because the sigil was the only likeness the scene had to the other murders. It could just be complete coincidence that whoever had done this had chosen a symbol Will knew. But somehow he doubted it.

He licked his lips in thought, debating whether to call Hannibal for help. He knew Alana could probably tell him what the symbol was, and she'd told him Hannibal probably didn't believe in this stuff, either. But then why had he taken such a strong interest in Will's learning about the arcane? It would have been hard to miss the signs, the way Hannibal would lean forward whenever Will would discuss the murders, the unfathomable look of intensity in his eyes. Will knew Hannibal was drinking up every detail Will gave him, but that didn't stop Will from spilling as much as he could. As though if he didn't give Hannibal enough to satiate him, Will would somehow be guilty of something. He had no idea of what.

In the end, in the interests of not slowing the investigation just to hear his psychiatrist's voice, he sent Alana a text with an attached image of the symbol. In minutes, he had his answer. According to Alana, it was the sigil of Lucifer. Go figure.

Will resisted the urge to take a deep breath, not wanting to inhale the scent of the rotting corpses. He looked back to the bodies, lost in thought. He was torn from those thoughts when the door opened and Jack poked his head in. Jack said, "You all done in here?"

Trying his best not to scowl, Will nodded, "Yeah. Just in time for the final analysis, actually." He stood and continued, "Whoever did this wanted protection from the demon Hobbs was trying to summon."

"So they think it worked?" Jack clarified.

Will nodded, "Yeah, they think it worked. Enough that their paranoia drove them to kill two people they thought had been consumed by the demon's power in order to save them."

"He killed them in order to spare them."

"In his mind, yes," Will conceded. "They will have been an acquaintance of Hobbs in some way. They won't have gotten along; if whoever did this knew what Hobbs was doing, they probably tried to stop him or sabotage his efforts at some point."

"I don't understand," Jack said. *Here we go,* Will groaned internally. "What would this accomplish? What good are the symbols on the chest, the angelic likeness?"

Will shrugged, "The symbol on the chest matches one of the symbols in the Hobbs pentagram. It signifies Lucifer, the demon prince of Pride."

"So, what, our guy was signing the demon's name on some gifts?"

Will ignored him, "Hobbs was trying to summon Lucifer for some reason, and I have to assume this person thought he succeeded and that the demon would be coming for them. So maybe they tried to free two people from Lucifer's influence and made them a peace offering on the side for added protection."

Jack's hands remained shoved in his pockets as he looked back to the bodies, "But no organs were taken."

"So Lucy didn't want the treat, if he was even here at all," Will said.

"Sounds to me like you might be starting to buy into this occult stuff, Will."

Will snorted softly, "I think no organs were taken because the demon doesn't exist, so it would be somewhat hard to be here at all, wouldn't you agree?"

Jack gave him a tight-lipped grin, "Yeah. I would."

Will nodded and began to head for the door, "Let me know if you find any potential suspects."

"Late for a therapy appointment?" Jack asked.

A chuckle made its way out of Will's mouth. "No," he said, not mentioning it wasn't Hannibal's office he planned on visiting.

Chapter End Notes

waves from the bottom of the abyss i'm not dead yet!!

i'm so sorry about the update pace of this story; i don't like making excuses, so i won't, and i'll just admit i suck at keeping on a schedule. but the story is about to get juicy again, so hopefully that prompts me into writing more often!! thanks for the patience <3

Bribes and Baubles

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The outside of Red Dragon Relics wasn't overly impressive. Granted, Will had never personally been a fan of antique shopping, so he didn't have a great basis of comparison; the blatantly haunted porcelain dolls that frequented every antique store he'd ever been in was enough to ward him well away from them. He chuckled under his breath--he was ready to believe in haunted dolls but not demons.

Be that as it may, the store front looked like it could do with a fresh coat of paint. It was nestled between two other shops on a strip of stores lining a street, a rock shop and a flower parlor. Together, the trio seemed a perfect combination. A place for your magic gemstones, a place for books on how to use them, and the place for herbs to tie your rocks and books in neat little anti-demonic bundles. Will had to wonder if the shop owners had planned it that way.

The door to the shop made a little *ding-a-ling* as he pushed it inward. He looked up, spotting the silver bell, and also taking note of, wouldn't you know it, a twine-wrapped bundle of some kind of dried herbs. Will had to resist the urge to roll his eyes, lest one of the store's patrons or workers caught the mocking act and cursed him for it, god forbid. Behind the counter, which had locked glass sliding doors with a collection of metal crosses contained within, a relatively short man with a scruffy gray beard said, "Hello! Welcome to the Red Dragon."

"Thank you," Will said, and with no idea where he'd even begin to look for the items on Alana's list, he made his way begrudgingly to the counter.

"You in the market for something specific?" the man asked, raising one scraggly eyebrow that complemented his beard.

Will dug around in his pocket, pulling out his hand-written note, saying, "Yeah, uh...I've never really been in a store like this. I'm looking for...cinnamon, myrrh, and galangal?"

The man made a knowing grunt and gave a small nod, his stormy blue eyes fixed on Will. "Got something of a demon problem then?" he asked.

"You know your stuff," Will replied, more to appeal to the man's apparent self-confidence to get him moving along faster.

The man nodded again, stepping out from behind the counter and leading Will to a wall with shelves of jars, much like the setup he'd seen in Alana's secret bunker. He grabbed a paper bag out of a stack in one of the cubicles, then asked, "What'd you do to anger it, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Oh, it's...more of a precautionary thing," Will said. "It's not mad at me, at least I don't think it is." If talking about it like it was real helped prevent a lecture on how to appease hell spawn, Will would keep it up as long as necessary.

"You'd best hope you're right," the man chuckled, opening a jar and using a pair of tongs to put a few springs of myrrh into the first bag before replacing the lid. "Don't suppose you know then what kind of demon it is?"

Great, so now they come in types. Will blew a breath through pursed lips, then asked, "Would archdemon be a good word for describing a prince of hell?" before he could think better of it.

The man's eyes widened a fraction, picking the lid back up and adding several more sprigs before moving on to the jar with what looked to Will's eyes like a sort of ginger root. "All due respect, lad," he said as he began loading the second bag with what must have been the galangal, "but if that's really what's on your trail, you're gonna need more than a bit of Abramelin oil to ward it off."

Will barely stopped himself from heaving a tired sigh. Ordinarily, he'd peg it up to the shop keep saying whatever was necessary to con his customers into buying more of his wares, but after speaking with Alana, Will could see in the man's eyes that he wholeheartedly believed what he was talking about, and had concern about Will's safety to boot. "Alright," Will conceded, "what would you suggest?"

After he'd packaged the galangal and had performed a similar ritual with some cinnamon sticks, he handed the three paper bags to Will and lead him to a table which had some velvet cushion-lined boxes. Nestled inside were glass amulets, mostly blue, with a circular eyeball design. "You'd best at least take a Nazar," the man said. "They're said to ward off the Evil Eye. Now, in all fairness, just keeping one on you would only be enough to deflect a basic Evil Eye curse--when someone looks upon you in jealousy. But, should you have it blessed and anointed in holy oil, or perhaps with holy water, it may hide your presence from this demon of yours altogether."

Will didn't particularly want to be caught with such a thing in his pocket, but he figured he could pawn it off to Alana if he got tired of carrying it around. He picked up the one closest to him, asking, "Would it work to hang it in my house?"

"Better to keep it on you," the man replied, "but I suppose if you get it blessed by the Pope himself, hanging it in your house just might work," he grinned.

Flying to Italy being out of Will's current pay grade, he resigned to the fate of having to keep the amulet with him. "Anything else?" he asked.

The man nodded, moving them back to the checkout counter with the array of crosses inside. He knelt down, unlocking the cabinet and reaching inside to pull out an ornate glass vial of water. "Holy water never hurts," he said, setting it on top of the counter. "And no, pouring this onto your Nazar won't count. Only use this," he tapped the counter next to the vial, "if your demon is within reach."

"Great, so emergency use only," Will said, setting the paper bags on the counter.

"Was there anything else you needed?" the man asked, giving Will a smile that said he didn't think he was going to live longer than a week, anyway. Might as well make money off him before he took the express train to hell, himself.

Will opened his mouth to say no, then hesitated before he changed his response. "Actually," he said, setting his arms on the counter and leaning forward, "do you have any books on Wendigos?"

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Will wasn't proud of the number of books he'd bought from the Red Dragon. One book became two, which became four, which became seven, which became twelve. Hannibal would probably laugh him out of his office if he knew how much he'd spent at the damn place. At least Alana could rest easy, knowing she'd accidentally coerced Will into spending a good portion of his paycheck. He sorted through all his new possessions on his desk, setting the Nazar and holy water near each other, stacking the books in four columns of three. He then took the paper bags to the kitchen, shortly realizing he didn't have a mortar and pestle to actually blend the ingredients into anything close to oil. He ran a hand through his hair, figuring a blender wasn't going to cut it. Now that he thought about it, he probably had to add them into oil, first. Well, if this demon did exist, Will was going to make an easy target for it.

He felt himself more than heard himself laughing, shaking his head and muttering, "What the fuck am I doing?" Whether he had this oil around his bed that night or not, he was certain he was still going to have nightmares, and no amount of oil or holy water or whatever was going to change the fact that he was protecting himself against nothing worse than the drafty window. Leaving the array of objects behind him, he went to take care of the next thing on his list. He went back to his yard and crouched by the trail camera. He flipped open the screen again, panning through the day's findings. Some turkeys, a squirrel, his dogs. He took care to look in the background of each, particularly in the tree line where he'd seen the antlers, but if the stag had been there while Will had been gone, it hadn't been feeling photogenic.

Will shut the screen and set it back up, feeling his phone buzz in his pocket from a text. He checked it, seeing that it was from a number he didn't recognize. He opened it, reading, *Will, this is Abigail. They moved me to a psych ward, but they said I can have visitors. You busy?*

Will felt his heart jump a beat. He paused, adding the number to his contacts so long as he was considering how to respond. He'd been starting to think he'd never get a message from her. It'd been about a week since they'd initially spoken. He hadn't planned on going back into the city, but now that he thought about it, he did know a certain someone with an aptitude for cooking who would probably own a mortar and pestle, along with a high quality olive oil. He typed out, *Not particularly. Want company?*

It didn't take long for his phone to buzz again. *Please.*

He chewed on his lower lip a moment before he typed, *Do you mind if I bring Dr. Lecter?*

Will's foot tapped as he waited, thinking he may have crossed a line too soon, but when his phone buzzed again, the new message said, *Sure*.
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Will nodded to himself, then switched contacts to type out a new message. *Abigail wants to see us again.*

Will waited, probably longer than strictly necessary, on Hannibal's response. He tried not to take it personally; the man had a life, and patients besides himself who were likely in far worse shape than he was. He busied himself by going back inside while he waited, checking the dogs' water bowls and then tossing the ingredients he needed for the oil into his car. He almost dropped his phone in his scramble to get it out of his pocket when it finally buzzed. Hannibal's name lit up the screen. The corner of Will's lips twitched up in a grin as he read, *Then we shouldn't keep her waiting.*

Will gave his dogs some frozen bones as an apology for leaving them again. He locked his front door and opened his car, pausing as he went to step inside, debating if he should bring his new amulet. In the end, he didn't feel like going back in the house.

He tried not to speed at he followed his phone's GPS to the new location, a mental facility near the hospital but not connected to the same building. Will had a vague memory of visiting one of his grandmothers in a place like this. It wasn't exactly comforting, but he at least had an idea of what to expect.

When he arrived, he glanced around the parking lot, half expecting Hannibal to be waiting for him. He tried not to feel disappointed when he wasn't. He went to the lobby, relaying who he was there to visit and in turn having his name added to the visitor's list. He let them lead him inside without waiting, knowing the doctor wouldn't be far behind, that is if he hadn't simply beaten him there. Will was lead to a room in a building which felt far more homey than a hospital, the walls painted a pleasant shade of blue. The woman leading Will knocked on a door at the end of the hall, and they heard Abigail say, "Come in."

Will was ushered in as the elderly woman leading him said, "Abigail, Mr. Graham is here to see you."

"Thanks, Janice," Abigail smiled. The woman, apparently Janice, smiled back and saw herself out. When they were alone, Will felt his mouth go dry. A chill crept up his spine, not unlike the one he'd felt when he'd first seen Abigail at the hospital. Granted, at least here it looked more like a motel. Abigail had a gauze patch on her neck, and a book in her lap, though with it sitting open, Will couldn't tell what it was. She said, "Hi."

"Hey," Will responded, only making eye contact for brief moments at a time, occupying his gaze elsewhere around the room, taking mental note of the details. He wasn't overly surprised to spot a cross on her nightstand, given what her father had been obsessing over before his death.

"Freddie Lounds came by again," Abigail said. Even her name left a sour taste on Will's tongue, and he hadn't even been the one to say it. "She reiterated that I shouldn't trust you."

Will cracked a small smirk, asking, "Then why invite me here?"

"Because I at least had to give you this address and invite you myself for you to find me," Abigail said.

Will snorted softly, "I have found it's better not to barge through people's doors unannounced, in my profession."

"Then you have that going for you," Abigail gave him a half smile. "Anyway, she warned me against you and Hannibal, so naturally, I wanted to ask you about it."

"Ask the man she warned you about why you shouldn't trust him?" Will asked, tilting his head slightly to one side.

"Who better to ask?" Abigail grinned. "If I'm going to decide not to trust someone, I want to come to that conclusion, myself. I trusted my dad, and look where that got me."

Will swallowed, then said, "Fair enough." He sat on one of the only other chairs in the room, making a motion with one hand, "Ask away."

Abigail closed her book and set it aside, saying, "Freddie said you never passed your screening to be an official FBI agent."

Will hummed, replying, "Too empathetic, if you'd believe it. Not to mention the mental instability. Kind of go hand in hand."

Abigail didn't take her eyes off him, pressing further, "She called you insane. That the only reason you can catch people like my dad-"

"Is because I can think like them. It's in my job description," Will interrupted. He shifted in his seat, folding his hands in his lap, saying, "Your dad...was the first person I've ever had to kill. It isn't something I take pride in." He squeezed his hands tighter, "I'm...sorry it happened the way it happened."

Abigail gave a small shrug, "If it hadn't, I wouldn't be here. But there is something I wanted to ask about why he was killing-"

She was interrupted by another knock on the door. As it swung open, Will saw Janice, and as his gaze flicked over her shoulder, he felt his back straighten like it was being pulled taut by a magnet. Janice stepped in to let Hannibal pass her as she said, "Doctor Lecter said you were expecting him?"

"I was, thank you," Abigail said. Janice smiled and shut the door behind herself once more.

When they were alone again, Hannibal said, "Glad to see you're making a swift recovery." He was holding a shopping bag with a store name in a fancy scripted font Will didn't recognize, and probably for good reason; any store with a pretentious font like that was not for Will's ilk.

"Thanks," Abigail said, eyeing the bag curiously. Hannibal silently set it on the bed for her, which she took with a certain amount of trepidation. She took the paper off the top, pulling out a selection of silk scarves. She returned her eyes to Hannibal's face with a smile, asking, "Why the bribery?"

"No bribe," Hannibal said, raising a hand palm outward. "I simply figured you would prefer it to walking about with your story on your neck."

Abigail put all the scarves save for one back in the bag, the one in her hands green with a darker green floral pattern. "That's an understatement," she replied. As Hannibal sat next to Will in the other free chair, Abigail said, "I was just asking Will about my dad."

"Please, don't let me interrupt," Hannibal said, gesturing between them for them to continue. He sat back, and Will couldn't help but stare a moment at the posture the doctor usually reserved for their therapy.

Will shook himself out of it as Abigail said, "I was just...wondering. You both made it sound like he still loved me. Like he wouldn't have done this," she lifted a hand to her neck, "if he had another choice. So...what *was* his other choice?"

Will glanced to Hannibal, who met his eyes with a look of curiosity. Will quietly hoped that maybe the other would jump in with one of his suave speeches, but when he remained silent, Will said, "He was...sacrificing other girls like you to this...demon. I still don't know why or how he even made contact with the thing to begin with. That is," he quickly interjected, "there isn't proof that the demon he worshipped is real, just...speculation. I don't know if he tried to bargain with it, or if it was sent to collect some kind of debt from him, but whatever the case, he was driven to kill six other girls in order to prevent it from taking you. Or...he thought so, anyway."

Abigail listened intently, picking the book back up off her nightstand, holding it so they could read the cover: Dante's Inferno. "He believed in it enough that he was willing to murder six people and me over it. But he wasn't crazy. He wasn't always obsessed with this stuff," she said. "He wasn't even always religious. That came after..."

Will waited a moment before he prompted, "After what?"

Abigail frowned down at the book, "After he met the bishop of his parish."

Before Will could ask, Hannibal leaned forward, asking, "Do you happen to know his name?" Will couldn't help but note the new posture, the one Hannibal always switched into when Will had said something to pique his interest.

"No, but the church was part of Saint Francis' Crossroads," Abigail said.

Will took a notepad from his pocket, jotting down the name. If there was a copycat killer on the loose, and he was influenced by Hobbs' work, where better to go for inspiration than the church which apparently inspired Hobbs himself? "How long ago did he meet this bishop?" Will asked.

"Just about a year ago," Abigail replied, which tracked with when the girls had originally started going missing. There was something in that church that held Will's answers--he could feel it. Hannibal remained quiet, his eyes lingering on Abigail.

"Thank you, Abigail," Will said. "We...probably shouldn't overstay our welcome."

She gave him a small smile and said, "It's fine. You're still proving to be better guests than Freddie."

Will turned his head to catch Hannibal's reaction to the name, managing to glimpse the corner of his lips tugging down. "I'm sure you're tired of sitting in bed," Hannibal said, recovering his composure. "How about we go for a short walk?"

"I'd like that," Abigail smiled, setting the book aside again and putting her new scarf on. "Let's go."

By the time Will and Hannibal had taken their leave, the sun was beginning to set, casting an orange glow across the city. Abigail had welcomed them back, which was a relief to Will, knowing that not only did she not hate him, but she evidently trusted him against Freddie's word. As they stepped into the parking lot, Will froze, saying, "Oh, doctor-"

"Hannibal, please," the other replied with an amused smile nonetheless.

"Hannibal," Will corrected, "I'm sorry, I don't mean to take advantage, but I almost forgot, I was hoping that...well, if you had one, I was hoping I could borrow a mortar and pestle?"

Hannibal narrowed his eyes a fraction, saying, "You've come to the right place, but whatever for?"

"It's...something to do with this case," Will said. He didn't know why he suddenly felt a sudden hesitation to be more specific. "I need to mix a particular oil. To compare to something found at a crime scene."

It was a lame excuse, Will knew it was. There were labs built for analyzing evidence like that. He was surprised when Hannibal actually said, "My kitchen is open to you. Come, I wouldn't want to impede your investigation."

Though it almost felt too easy, Will said, "Thank you. I'll see you at your place."

"The pleasure will be mine," Hannibal grinned, walking off and heading to his car, a sleek, black vehicle Will didn't have a name for. He felt butterflies erupt in his chest when the doctor turned and met his eyes across the lot, lingering a moment before ducking down to get inside it. Will felt heat in his cheeks as he got into his own comparatively trashy car, then set his head on the steering wheel. His hopeless romantic imaginings were interrupted when his phone buzzed. He instantly felt an oncoming migraine when he saw Jack's name on screen. He opened the message, the butterflies becoming frozen in place.

We've got another one.

Chapter End Notes

does a gay little dance why do I ever make any assumptions ever about my own update pace?

Much has changed since last we met, dear readers. I have a college degree, I'm living on my own, I have to get my own insurance--good stuff. If you were with me when I first posted this fic online, kudos to you for forgiving me enough to come back! One thing lead to another in my life, wherein I hit several roadblocks that kept me from wanting to write, and I don't want to bring the mood down by getting into it. Suffice it to say, I'm on a better path now, and by golly I've basically entirely forgotten where I was going with this fic!

So! Please bear with me while I get back on my feet again with this WIP. I'm not making any promises or assumptions with when I'll post another update for it ever again (deadass, the other day I was like it's been like two years now right? I shit a brick house when I saw the last updated date...my bad y'all). But I CAN promise that I will try my damnedest to do better by you all this time and not leave a fic on a four year cliffhanger again :)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!